

Bhakti Yoga Sagar

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



VOLUME FOUR

Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Bhakti Yoga
Sagar

VOLUME FOUR

With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Sriani Niranjan

Bhakti Yoga Sagar

(Ocean of the Yoga of Devotion)

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

*Satsangs at Sri Panch Dashnam Paramahansa Alakh Bara,
Rikhia, Deoghar, during the Ram Naam Aradhana,
from 26th November to 24th December 1996.*

VOLUME FOUR



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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Published by Sivananda Math

First edition 1999

Published by Yoga Publications Trust

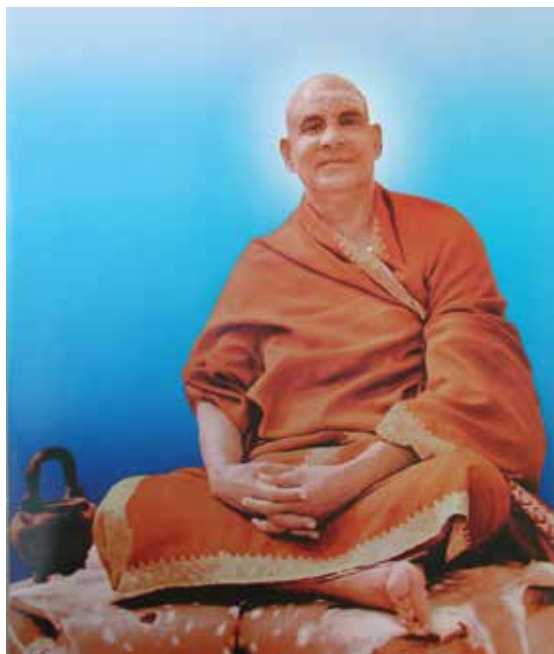
Reprinted 2007

ISBN: 978-81-86336-65-6

Publisher and distributor: Yoga Publications Trust, Ganga Darshan,
Munger, Bihar, India.

Website: www.biharyoga.net

Printed at Thomson Press (India) Limited, New Delhi, 110001



Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

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Satsang 1

November 25, 1996

To sing God's name is the quickest and easiest way to realize yourself. Even if you practise kirtan for four hours at a stretch there are no side effects. Every other kind of yoga, if practised incorrectly, has some side effects, but kirtan has none. Instead it can overcome depression, anxiety, high blood pressure and every other problem. Since kirtan can be so useful to humanity there should be proper training in it.

Today people all over the world take a keen interest in music. You hear music being played on planes, in big departmental stores, in hotels, even in banks. On television music is played not ninety percent but one hundred percent of the time. That music has a great effect on the subconscious level of the mind. Commercial psychologists use this in advertising. When they advertise a consumer item they add music because music penetrates directly into the level of feelings, the subconscious level. Music does not stop at the level of reason. It reaches much deeper to the level of emotion, and emotion is beyond reason.

Emotion does not exist within the confines of reason. It is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* that the intellect is above the senses and the *atma*, or soul, resides above the intellect. The soul and the feelings are one and the same. Don't you have

feelings for your children? What happens is that you see yourself in the child. What does soul mean? Soul means the Self. The atma, the Self, and the feelings are the same. You may call it *bhavana* or you may call it atma, Self, or spirit. So, music affects the feelings, the atma, and it is a very powerful tool. Therefore, along with your yoga you should add music, kirtan.

Pilgrimage places

So some of you went to Trikut and visited the ashram there. The name of that ancient mountain west of the Akhara is Trikut. The word *trikut*, or *trikuti*, is synonymous with ajna chakra. These people have been to Trikut and have taken photos and films for television. They tell me what kinds of birds and plants are there. They are adventurous people who love to discover new things.

Indians are not so adventurous. What has actually happened today is that Indians have set themselves only one goal, and that is money. Money is the motivation behind everything – business, employment, marriage. Any vocation or profession is done purely for money. This goal is wrong. Wealth and money are a means, not an end. When wealth remains a means it does not influence man wrongly, but when money becomes the end in itself, then it starts corrupting man. He becomes sensual, indolent and complacent, or else he becomes overambitious or an addict. He falls into bad habits and begins to misuse money.

We are not averse to money. Do not think we are criticizing wealth and that we uphold poverty. We never say that poverty is preferable. For us the two words ‘wealth’ and ‘Lakshmi’ are synonymous. Wherever Lakshmi goes, she has a vehicle of her own. Just as we go places in a Maruti or an Ambassador, our Lakshmi, too, goes in her vehicle. Her vehicle is not an Ambassador car, it is the owl. The owl is invisible during the day and seen only at night. Therefore, Lakshmi is welcomed at night-time.

The master or lord of Lakshmi is Vishnu. Vishnu’s vehicle is the eagle, Garuda, and Lakshmi’s vehicle is the

owl. The eagle is far-sighted, it has distant vision. When you call Lakshmi alone then she will come on her own vehicle, the owl, and as you know the owl does not see very well. But if she comes with Vishnu then she will come on his vehicle, the far-sighted Garuda. Therefore, *bhakti* and *bhoga*, devotion and enjoyment, should go hand in hand.

There are numerous tourist attractions in India. Elsewhere people just visit a place, stay in a hotel, do some swimming or skiing and go home. But in India there are many beautiful pilgrimage places such as Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Jamunotri, Tapowan, Jwalamukhi, Vaishnodevi, Rameshwaram. There are many holy places in the Himalayas and even to this day *rishis* and *munis*, realized sages and saints, inhabit these places. It is not fiction. Yogis do live in the remote Himalayas even today.

You cannot get a direct line from a generating station because the energy has first to go to a transforming station to be converted into domestic power. In the same way, in order to grasp the spiritual energy, we have to turn to the *mahatmas*, or great souls, who are the generators and repositories of spiritual power. They live in complete solitude and isolation. Once we were returning from Gangotri by car and down below us flowed the Ganga. On the other side of her banks there were two caves where some sadhus were living. Someone asked, "What must these people eat?" and I replied, "Have they come all this way just to eat?"

The sages and saints who live in such places are of a very high stature. They are realized souls who have arrived and have nothing to do with this mundane world. You cannot make a direct connection to the place where electricity is generated. Similarly, these sages are the generators of power, but how can you contact them? You look for those who have put up a spiritual signboard. We are spiritual vendors; they are different. They do not set up a shop; they cannot even be easily located. If you go to them you will get nothing. They will only ask, "Why have you come here?"

Once I went to see a mahatma. He asked me what I was doing there. I said, "I have come to have your darshan."

Thereupon he said, “You fools, idiots, coming for darshan! What will you see? There is nothing here for your eyes.” So I said, “I have heard your name.” He replied, “What is there in a name? Those with big banners can also be small-time shopkeepers. Go, go away from here!” Then he asked, “Where are you staying tonight? Surely not here!” He did not let me stay there, he drove me out. So at that time I thought to myself, “What a crackpot he is!” But today I realize his worth.

These days people who have extra money squander it on the wedding ceremonies of their daughters. Some spend all their money on their son’s education. Boys require a lot of money for their education and their parents go on indulging them. They keep spending on their children, saying, “After all, who is all this money for, if not for our own children?” But should you earn money just to indulge your children and for no other higher purpose? You should also spend on a better cause.

Panchagni tapas

When I came to Rikhia in 1989 I thought to myself, well, I left home, I took sannyasa, but I was still living in the world of maya. I do not say I remained untainted, because which wise man will go into a house of soot expecting to come out clean and spotless? If you enter a coal mine, however cautious you may be, whatever care you take, you cannot avoid getting smeared with soot. I worked without desire and thought that I was doing nishkama seva, or service of my guru, yet I could not avoid the blemish of karma. After all, the world of action is the world of maya, and maya will put her imprint on each and everyone, without any exception.

So I had to wash and cleanse the black patches of karma. How could I do this? For a sannyasin the way of purification is Panchagni tapas. *Panchagni* means ‘five fires’. Did you see the four fires over there? The fifth fire is the sun overhead. It is a very difficult tapas. I was scared of Panchagni because I could not bear even one fire. For me 25 degrees Centigrade was too high a temperature, although I could

easily tolerate the cold, even as low as 3 degrees Centigrade. I could remain naked even in Denmark, but heat I could not tolerate. I had to decide whether or not I could do the *Panchagni tapas*, the five fires austerity. I thought that if I faced the five fires and could not bear the heat, then I would become dehydrated and sick. Then another thought came to my mind. *Tulsi*, a type of basil, is the best medicinal plant, so I chose Tulsi to be my presiding deity, my *ishta devi*, and I started practising *pooja*, worship, of Tulsi, according to the tantric system.

I started reading all the classical literature on the rituals for Tulsi, including the tantra shastras, and then I performed the marriage of Tulsi. Just the day before the marriage was celebrated I was looking for a Shaligram, when someone brought me one from Nepal. All these years it had been an imaginary marriage, but this year it was a real marriage ceremony. So I decided that Tulsi would be the presiding deity of the Akhara and then I started practising Panchagni.

It was a tapas of five years! Even today I find it hard to believe that I did it. I was saying to Swami Niranjana, “My God, I wonder how I ever accomplished the Panchagni tapas!” When I think back over these past five years I am amazed at my own feat. I don’t know how it happened. One day the temperature went up to 90 degrees Centigrade. Can you imagine how hot 90 degrees Centigrade can be? The normal temperature was 50 to 60 degrees. In the cold season, when I started the fire in the morning, I would begin the sadhana with a temperature of 35 degrees and then smear my body with *bhasma*, holy ash. The bhasma intensified the sensation of heat, along with the feeling of bliss.

I faced the five fires from sunrise to sunset, from 14th January, Makar Sankranti, to 16th July, Karka Sankranti, from the Capricorn solstice to the Cancer solstice, during the summer only, not during the winter. There was one fire to the North, one to the South, one to the East, one to the West, and the fifth fire was the sun above. When the wind blew sparks I would get black marks all over my body, so I put on bhasma to protect it. I prepared a special bhasma,

called *maha bhasma*, which is made with cow's ghee and treated eleven times with many herbs, honey and other things added to it. I would apply it in the morning. I used no oil and ate only once a day.

Swami Niranjan used to send me raw coconut from Munger. It is surprising that we don't grow coconut in Bihar. Have you ever seen coconut plantations in Bihar? Ten to fifteen years ago I planted one hundred and fifty coconut saplings in Munger. Everybody laughed at my idea and even I did not know why I was planting them. But during the period of my Panchagni sadhana these trees came to my rescue. Then I knew that it was God who had given me the wisdom to plant coconuts because He had foreseen my Panchagni tapas. All day I would drink fresh coconut water, one after another, to prevent dehydration. In one day I would consume about eight to ten fresh, tender coconuts. Munger used to send me an ample supply. They had a good crop, each tree yielding about a hundred to one hundred and fifty coconuts, so I thought that I would plant some coconut saplings here also because they are very useful.

Bhole was with me during Panchagni. That Alsatian dog can't bear heat at all. I would put bhasma on him in the morning and he would sit with me. He would drink water once a day and urinate once a day. I also used to urinate once a day, as all the fluids in the body would dry up due to the intense heat.

Now I don't believe that I can do Panchagni again. I don't have the confidence because it is very difficult. I was able to do it only because of the blessings of Tulsi. I prayed to her for one thing only. I said, "Keep me fit, that's all, nothing else," because I did not want to miss this anushtana, even for one day, and I did not miss it. It is not with pride but with gratitude that I say, since I have come here I have not missed even one day of whatever sadhana I have undertaken. I am not a young man, I have a snowy beard, but I can sit for ten or twelve hours without any problems, no pain in the joints, no diabetes, no blood pressure, no angina, no headache, no colds or fever. This is

all the miracle of Tulsi. I didn't pray to Tulsi for money, an ashram, magical arts, erudition, siddhis or yogic powers. I prayed only for health and fitness.

In 1990, in addition to Panchagni, I added another sadhana. I undertook to complete one hundred and eight lakh (10,800,000) repetitions of the mantra of my ishta devata. This took me three hundred days, and I worshipped Tulsi daily.

Childlike faith

In the ritualistic worship of Tulsi, or any other god for that matter, only one thing counts and that is childlike faith. The secret of all rituals, whether Hindu, Christian or tantric, is just childlike faith, the faith of a child. For an intellectual, Tulsi is just a plant, but for me, Tulsi is not a plant, she is a Devi. I marry her every year to the Shaligram.

Shaligram is found in the sulphurous water of the Gandaki river at Muktinath. It grows and thrives in bunches, like the Tulsi grove. There is a certain flower which people in olden times used to pluck and put in the water. Then a creature would come out and people would catch it. The inner core of that creature is the Shaligram. Do not ask the why of it. This question why comes from the head, it does not come from the heart. The heart does not question, it believes, and you believe a lot of things. You may pose a lot of questions like, "Why do people marry? Why are children born? Why is man created at all?" We are not interested in the whys and there are no answers for too many whys.

In the evening, around four or four-thirty, I did the arati and put up an elaborate red brocade canopy. After the wedding the bride and the groom are put together in a room, so I also put up an enclosure for their privacy. The wedding ceremony was very pleasing and many people watched it. We are poor people and we could not afford a band. The rich celebrate their marriages with a lot of pomp and a musical band, but we performed the wedding quietly, without a band.

All the ornaments offered here, which I give to the newlywed girls of the locality, belong to Tulsi. They are first and foremost offered to her. Whenever you give me a golden bracelet, nose ring or hair ornament, you are in fact offering it to her, as she is the owner of the property. Everything is first dedicated to Tulsi and then later presented to the new brides of this locality.

Karmic clearance

When I came to Rikhia many things became clear to me, the foremost of which was that I am not to participate in marriages or funerals. It is the vow of a sanniyasin, because marriage and funeral are both taboo for a sanniyasin. As I could not participate in their marriages, I decided to give these girls gold on the occasion of *dwiragaman*, and the reason behind it is this. You may not be aware that it is the girls who have contributed most to the cause of yoga and yajna. It is their diligence and dedication that has been uppermost. So when I came here I thought that my first and foremost duty was towards the girls.

College girls are given bicycles to go to college because they must educate themselves. Boys can ask for lifts but girls cannot. Girls are also given a trousseau, the box of gifts that accompanies them when they leave for their husband's house. The boxes are filled with saris and cosmetics to bedeck the newlywed girls. The vanity case is called *suhag pitari*. At first we had chests made, but now ready-made boxes are available. This month fifty chests were given away to fifty girls.

Whenever a girl gets married and leaves her mother's house to go and live with her husband, she comes here and receives a trousseau chest from us. All the people living around me are working class people, daily wage earners who lift stones on their heads, use portable pushcarts, and ride cycles. This year I have decided to give away twenty-five or thirty portable pushcart shops to these neighbours.

You are indebted to the society in which you live, which is all around you. If you do not redeem that debt then you

become a culprit of the disorder that will creep into the society in which you exist. You owe a debt to the society you live in and you must discharge that debt. If there was no society then you would be living in a jungle. Today you are secure because you are part of an organized society. If you destroy that society you will not survive. Remember this, you have an organized society for your own security. Society is your security and you are a part of that society.

Therefore, you cannot ignore the debt you have to pay to society. Not everybody can spend fifty or sixty thousand rupees to get a boy or girl educated and married, but one can surely repay the debt one owes to society in one's own way. So we have a separate department for this. Just as you marry off your own daughter, we also help a girl to get married and send her off to her husband. Thus, if we get two to three thousand girls married and sent away to live with their husbands, then we have offloaded so many lifetimes of karmic debt.

The bonds of karma carry forward from lifetime to lifetime. These karmic bonds need to be exhausted, and how will you exhaust them if not by such leaps and bounds? On the contrary, you are delaying and postponing the discharging of karmas by thinking that you will do it tomorrow. Come on, hurry up! Get forty to fifty girls married off and exhaust your karma. You will be free from the bondage. If you manage to get two to three thousand girls married then there is a complete clearance of karma, with no backlog.

I have a sense of reverence towards Tulsi. In our Akhara two spirits are very important: one is Tulsi and the other is Bhole. His astrological chart says that he was born under the zodiac sign of Dhanu (Sagittarius). Bhole is not the name of my son; it is the name of my dog. Do not get it mixed up. He has had a lot of wealth in his possession right from birth. If he had been a boy instead of a dog, he would have brought riches and opulence to the house. Ever since he came here the storehouse which we have named after him has never been empty.

Donation of cows

We also donate cows. The biggest benefit of this has come to me. I have never seen such a flood of milk, nor have I ever drunk so much milk before in my life. I am not a milk-drinking sage. I used to drink milk once in a blue moon, but now there is a daily supply of milk and milk products: kheer, cottage cheese, paneer, curd, kadhi, kofta. Dairy products have replaced vegetables. On the first day there is wheat porridge, on the second day milk and rice, on the third day curd and rice, on the fourth day rotis with paneer kofta, and on the fifth day cottage cheese.

A cow is brought and kept here in the name of a villager. Then a family member of that villager – his wife, sister, daughter or somebody else – comes morning and evening to look after it. They carry out whatever service is necessary for the cow's upkeep such as milking, cutting the fodder and cleaning the cowshed. They are trained for one month in tending the cow. If the cow has any health problems then a vet is consulted. A sannyasin from Bilaspur has come to give veterinary training and consultations in treating any health problems. After one month the villagers take the cow away to their homes. During this one-month training period we get a good supply of milk. Now there are two milking cows that give abundant milk, about twelve to fifteen litres a day. The swamis enjoy this milk treat and say they put on weight within no time. I think the best *daan*, or gift, is that of a cow. Go on donating cows.

Angling for Shiva

All humans have cataracts, not only physical but also inner. A cataract is an eye ailment. It means that even though you have eyes, you cannot see anything. We all have eyes, but no vision. So, a few years ago I decided to have a cataract operation. What is this eye ailment, *drishti dosha*? Shiva comes to listen wherever Rama's name is chanted, but nobody can see him because nobody has that vision.

When Swami Niranjan asked me what my plans were this year, I told him there was no plan as it meant a lot of

hassle. Then I thought I would hook Shankarji, I would go angling for Shiva. Angling is fishing. So, sing Rama's name, put your heart and love into it, and then Shiva will come. Even though you cannot see him, at least you will have him in your midst.

Sannidhya, salokya, samipya and sayujya are the four stages of bhakti. *Sannidhya* means nearness or proximity to the Lord. If nothing else, even nearness will do. It doesn't even matter if we can't see God, at least we will have Him amongst us. We will enjoy proximity to Him. He could be sitting next to us but in what form we do not know. We cannot say whether He will come in the four-armed human form or in another form.

The Lord has said that He left behind his four-armed form in *Satya yuga*, the epoch of truth, and *Dwapar yuga*, the middle epoch. In *Kali yuga*, the present epoch, God is coming in the guise of a destitute because nobody would bother about a ragged beggar. They would ignore or pooh-pooh Him and pay attention only to well-dressed people. A girl who dresses well is called beautiful. You say hello to someone who is suited, booted and fashionably well clad, but if an ill-clad person comes to your house, you shoo him away and tell him that the master is not home.

God will come in attire that will mislead us, so we should understand this. Do not look for a four-armed human form. If you have His darshan in that form, well and good, but God always comes in an unexpected, unimaginable form, especially with a dark appearance that deceives the eyes. Just as the origin of all precious things, such as diamonds, gold and pearls, is hidden and needs a discerning eye to discover it, in the same way, we require a special type of vision to see God in the form which He chooses to appear in before us.

Satsang 2

November 26, 1996

I had decided not to have a special program this year, as it becomes a big burden. There is a saying in Hindi that you fall from the sky and instead of landing steadfast on the ground you get stuck in the palm tree. In short, you get waylaid from your destination. Well, I fell from the skies and got stuck in the palm trees of Munger. I got entrapped there and I didn't want the same thing to happen here. But, one day, while I was reciting the *Ramayana* a certain line gave me an idea. The idea was to lure Lord Shiva with the bait of Rama's name, because the *Ramayana* says that Shiva loves the name of Rama so much that he is sure and certain to drop in wherever Rama's name is being chanted. Similarly if you take up the name of Shiva, Lord Rama is pleased. So, in Deoghar we chant the name of Rama and in Ayodhya *Om Namah Shivaya* is chanted.

I became old doing japa, austerities, anusthana, self-control, brahmacharya and so on, but achieved nothing. Whatever I gained was only superficial. The real gain is to have darshan of Lord Shiva. I wondered how I could have Lord Shiva's darshan. I thought of two possible ways. One was to have my eyes operated upon for cataracts. As long as there is a cataract, even if Lord Shiva stands directly in front of you, you will not see him.

Everybody has the same problem. It is just possible that at this very moment he is present here. But can you see him? No. Whatever direction you move your eyes in, it is of no use because the eyes have cataracts. In the *Ramayana* it is called an error in perception. So, for the last six or seven years I have been sitting here undergoing an eye operation. Now is the time to see whether it has been a success or a failure. Only God will know.

So I thought, Lord Rama, too, is happy in the month of Marga Shirsha. He was married in this month and marriage is a happy occasion, a joyful celebration. Marga Shirsha is the most sacred of all the twelve months. The *Bhagavad Gita* also considers this to be one of the best months. Thus I considered all sides, calculated all the factors and planned this festival. It is not a convention, a program or a fair. It is like this: you sing Rama's name and, as Lord Shiva descends, you catch a glimpse of him. Remember, that you may read and recite the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, do pooja or any other form of worship, but as long as the atmosphere is not purified and rendered suitable for his darshan, it is of no use. Life without darshan of Lord Shiva is incomplete.

So, when Swami Niranjana asked me, "What are we going to do this year?" at first I said, "No, another program is too much for me! I am not going to repeat the same mistake of falling from the frying pan into the fire, from Munger to here! I left Munger for solitude. I don't want crowds!" But then this idea came to me while reading the *Ramacharitamanas*.

I am a regular reader of *Ramacharitamanas*, not the *Ramayana* of Valmiki, but the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas, which was written four or five hundred years ago. Tulsidas was an orphan. His mother died five days after giving birth and he roamed around like a beggar. His book has stirred the souls of millions and millions in this country and given a complete expression, a new definition of Rama. There I came across this reference. Lord Shiva is speaking to Parvati, his consort, and he says, "Parvati, wherever the name of Rama is repeated, I must visit that place."

Maybe today there will be a dialogue like this between Shiva and Parvati. Shiva may say, “Parvati, I have to go wherever Rama’s name is sung. Rama is getting married and I must attend the ceremony, so let us go to Rikhia!” Won’t such a dialogue take place? Yes! The Lord will say, “Swami Satyananda has spread a net to catch me, he has baited a hook just like they use to catch fish.”

But Parvati will caution Shiva and say, “Yes, he is very shrewd. He is trying to entice you.” And the Lord will say, “Never mind, at least I will hear the name I love so much, the name containing just two syllables, *Ra* and *Ma*.” You just heard the essence of the entire *Ramayana* being sung from *Shuddha Brahma* to the *Dharmasthapana*. The melody was composed by me and the words start with pure Brahma and end with the establishment of dharma. It will be sung here for the whole month during Ram Naam Aradhana.

We have also added dance to our worship of Rama’s name. Lord Shiva loves dancing, so we are celebrating the program this year with different classical dance forms of India. The aradhana will begin with the presentation of *Bharatnatyam*, which is an ancient art form, the oldest dance tradition of India. In our country, dance is not performed for sensual pleasure but as an expression of bhakti. In the Vedic tradition, dance is an expression of the devotion of inner consciousness. When your heart is filled with joy it dances, and when the heart rejoices, the body also swings into dance.

There will be an Odissi dance concert to commemorate the wedding of Sri Rama and Sita. Odissi is a beautiful and graceful dance form from Orissa. To conclude our worship at the end of Ram Naam Aradhana there will be the dynamic dance style of Kuchipudi from Andhra Pradesh. In between, if I feel inspired I, too, may show my dance.

Form of Lord Shiva

Lord Shiva is always in natural attire. He never ages. There is no bed for him to sleep on. Everything about him is unkempt. If Ganga had not sat in his matted hair, it would

have been full of lice. Lord Shiva is just the opposite of his son, Ganesha. Ganesha eats good food. He loves sweets. You cannot imagine how many laddoos he eats. He keeps company with a mouse. Shiva is his antithesis; he follows a path diametrically opposed to that of Ganesha. Therefore, *seva*, service, of Lord Shiva means service of those people who are deprived, miserable and destitute. *Panchavaktram* and *trinetrām*, five-headed and three-eyed, is his form. Yogis pine and yearn for darshan of this form.

*The Ganga on top of his head,
The serpent garlanding his neck,
Broad-browed, three-eyed,
Smeared in white,
Such is Shivashankara,
The consort of Girija.*

This form of the Lord is even beyond the reach of yogis, but we can see him embodied in suffering humanity. This is the possibility in Kali yuga. All of you who aspire to have the experience of Lord Shiva should try to remember that he will be seen in a very decrepit form, in people who are poor, who are suffering from disease, who are totally helpless. It is easy to see God in a temple with five heads and three eyes, but it is hard to see God among the poor. Everybody wants to see God only in the *mandir*, the temple, but you should seek Him among the poor.

Therefore, this month is a long session of worship. If you want to invite Lord Shiva then chant the name of Lord Rama who lives in Ayodhya. If you want to lure Rama to yourself, then worship Shankara. They worship each other; they are mutual devotees. Lord Shankara always worships Lord Rama. This is his weak point, his secret, the one way to entice him into giving his darshan.

Easiest form of sadhana

Even throughout my old age I did all kinds of sadhana, to the extent of Panchagni, but now the sadhana has become very simple – the aradhana of Ram Naam, worship of

Rama's name. The name of Rama will be chanted with devotion and the story of Rama's life will be narrated and enacted here. Many pandits and mahatmas have already arrived. Dr Shukaratna Upadhyaya will address the gathering. Dr Manas Vishwas is coming from Datia to give a discourse on Rama. Krishna Devi is also expected and Rajeshwarananda, a Muslim, who is a different kind of a man altogether. Such a Muslim easily outshines hundreds of Hindus. Dawood Khan, also a Muslim, is coming from Madhya Pradesh to tell us of the glory of Rama's name.

It would be delightful to listen to the Koran being recited by a Hindu. I dream that one day Mahamahopadhyaya Dawood Mian will perform abhishek in the Kashi Vishwanath temple in Benares, and Maulana Shukaratna Upadhyaya will do namaz in the Jama Masjid mosque. This is a possibility in India. Isn't the priest of Badrinath, the Vaishnava shrine, a Shaivite? Badrinath is the temple of Lord Rama, Narayana, but the priest in this Vaishnava temple bears the trident.

There was a time when the Vaishnavites and the Shaivites were at loggerheads, just like the Hindus and the Muslims are today. So anything is possible on this subcontinent of India. The best way is to have unity in devotion and unity among the devotees because God is One. God may have many names, but whether you say Rama or Rahim, both names refer to the same God. Soap or *sabun*, water or *pani*, these are just different words indicating the same thing. Sugar has the same sweet taste whether it is Pakistani, American, Russian or Chinese.

Charity – the mother of poverty

One day the Lord spoke to me and said, "Look after your neighbours in the way I have looked after you. At least you have a hut, so give them a hut also." Therefore, I have made a resolve to give houses, cows, rickshaws and handcarts to the destitute villagers. Today we are giving a handcart and a rickshaw. Come on, bring them in. These poor labourers will now be able to earn thirty or forty rupees a day. Why should

they beg? Call them. Bring the rickshaw and handcart in. Whatever God gives me, I will give them. I want only a loincloth, and that, too, is for your sake, not for myself. Can it keep out the cold? I wear it out of respect for you. If there is a command, I will discard it as well.

In Deoghar you will find rickshaws and handcarts with 'Presented by Sivananda Math' written on the back. The town is just flooded with them. In China there is a proverb, "If you come across a poor man, don't just give him fish, which will only serve as his dinner. Instead teach him how to fish so that he can feed himself for the rest of his life." I also think like that. If you give someone *dahi-chura*, curd and flattened rice, it is good for his emergency needs, but if you keep showering gifts upon him then it makes him poorer. Charity is the mother of poverty. Thoughtless charity or too much charity brings about more poverty, although charity may be necessary in a time of calamity, such as earthquake, drought or flood.

A society that lives on charity is not a healthy one. Society needs hard-working people. I am surrounded by labourers, working class people. The people of this district have decided to increase the yield of rice and wheat. They have been making an effort in this direction since last year. They are also getting high quality seeds for vegetable farming. Let us see how long it will take to show results. God took millions of years to create this universe, to make it what it is today. I do not know how long this creation will take to fructify.

Significance of dance

I will now explain the place that dance occupies in spiritual life. Today people are tired of the dancing in films and think it is madness, but dance is not a bad thing in itself. It is the dance that takes place between Shiva and Parvati. Even the sun, moon and stars do nothing but dance.

When I was eight years old, Uday Shankar established his school of dancing in Almora, and I joined. I had my initial training there. I became so involved in dancing that I gave

up music. I liked the flute very much but I left it. Dancing also brought me some money because every year during Rama Lila we children loved to dance. In those days one or one and a half rupees was a lot of money. One rupee could buy twelve kilos of wheat flour. I won medals and would earn fifteen or twenty rupees. When I went to Rishikesh I took part in programs and performed my own dance. Then I came to Munger and there, too, I danced.

In my early days I was lean and thin. I was leaner and thinner than Swami Niranjan. In 1968 I left on my first world tour and within fifteen days my stomach had become bloated. I am a complacent person; I have never been ambitious or dissatisfied. Whatever God has given me is ample, whatever I get is enough. This is my way of thinking.

I eat only once a day. I do not drink milk. I eat only rotis, I do not eat rice and yet I do not reduce. When the mind is relaxed there is a flow of hormones which transforms the fat metabolism. So, I decided to become anxious and tense but I just do not know how. Then I thought, "Okay, if my stomach reduces, well and good, but if it doesn't happen it doesn't happen. Let it be."

In 1966 I gave up dance. Now I have resumed the practice and I do it on and off. Maybe this event will bring back the tempo. I will see if I have forgotten something. I am practising once again. I cannot dance regularly but I can do the Tandava dance, because in Tandava there is neither melody nor rhythm, *sur* nor *tal*. You just dance vigorously, riotously, boisterously.

In South India, especially in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, dance is revered as an art form. Girls are taught dancing and singing from childhood. Now dance is also spreading in North India but, along with classical dance, the distorted or perverted form of dance is also coming into vogue. I don't know if it is a distorted form or the edition of Kali yuga. You see, it is the spirit. The mouth is shut, the heart and consciousness are open and you see everything – the lotus, the beauty, the greatness.

Satsang 3

November 27, 1996

The premises of Alakh Bara are like a *vatika*, or garden. In Rome, the Vatican of the Pope was originally just a *vatika*. In English it is called a hermitage, a place where sadhus live. There was no ashram; it was called a *vatika*. The Vatican has its origin in the word 'vatika'. Vatican is not an Italian word, it is a Sanskrit word.

Purpose of Ram Naam Aradhana

I did not intend to come out of seclusion this year because I have devoted myself to the study of Srimad Bhagavatam. So, when Swami Niranjana asked if there was anything he could do during this period, I said, "No, you are already going out of India. Who will organize all these functions?" I also have to look after this property because it was acquired very recently. Where you people are sitting was previously a very deep ditch of seven or eight metres. We filled it with truckloads of mud to make this sitting area. All the swamis worked day and night with the truck and tractor to fill it. One day the tractor got stuck in a deep ditch. It was pouring rain and we had to pull it out with a chain, which took many hours, as the rain was relentless.

This year I had intended to remain in seclusion but, you see, I have a very funny relationship with Sri Rama. I am

a Shaiva sannyasin, although I don't wear geru because I belong to the Paramahansa tradition. The form and colour of the dress does not matter in the case of Paramahansas. I can wear any clothes now. A sannyasin is a Shaiva, but right from childhood I had a great attraction for Sri Rama. So at the time of initiation from my guru I had difficulty in choosing a mantra. It was just like a man caught in a dilemma over two women, whom to marry? But my guru managed it for me. He said, "Okay, Rama is your ishta devata and *Om Namah Shivaya* is your mantra."

This means when I am practising *Om Namah Shivaya*, I am concentrating on:

*Neelaambujashyaamala komalaangam
Seeta samaaropita vaamabhaagam;
Paanau mahaasaayaka chaaruchaapam
Namaami Raamam Raghuvanshanaatham.*

I bow to Lord Rama, Lord of the Raghus,
Whose body is soft, blue like the lotus,
At whose side sits Sita,
And who holds the powerful bow and arrow in
his hands.

I have read the *Ramacharitamanas* of Tulsidas and the other *Ramayanas*: Valmiki *Ramayana* and Ananda *Ramayana*. I think spiritual people who want to realize God should read *Ramacharitamanas*. I have done many anushtanas of *Ramacharitamanas*, *navanha parayan*, the entire *Ramayana* completed within nine days, and also in one day. During Navaratri I completed the entire *Ramayana* every day for nine days. I woke at midnight, took a bath and sat down to read the *Ramayana*. I started from the first sloka:

*Varnaanaamarthasanghaanam
Rasaanaam chhandasaamapi;
Mangalaanaam cha kartaarau
Vande vaaneevinaayakau.*

I offer my salutations to Saraswati and Ganesha,
The creators of sounds and their letters,
The meanings of words, poetic sentiments
And the begetters of all blessings.

I went right up to the end, completing it at four p.m. I didn't eat, drink, sleep or do anything else except *Ramayana* from twelve midnight till four p.m., sixteen hours daily, for nine days. It is possible. When you give your total mind to spiritual life, when everything else becomes either secondary or useless, then it is not difficult.

Then it came to my mind one day that, although *Om Namah Shivaya* is my mantra, I have never thought about having a glimpse of Shiva. I was always trying to have a glimpse of Sri Rama, with bow and arrow, crown, beautiful clothes, and with Sita, the symbol of strength, the symbol of *maryada*, righteousness, the symbol of gentleness. Rama was a man of principle, and Sita, a woman of great courage. Rama's entire life was one of tragedy, and how to fare in the face of difficulties is something we should learn from him. But, I thought, let me try Shiva this time. Who is this Shiva whose name I repeat? Is he the Shiva of Baidyanath, Somnath, Pashupatinath or Vishwanath? Who is he?

I have seen him in the shivalingam: *Om namo hiranyabaahave senaanye dishaam cha pataye namah*, but I have never thought about him. I only sing his name, *Om Namah Shivaya*, in Yaman Kalyan every morning, meditating on a photograph of Sri Rama seated on his throne in total bliss. So I thought to myself, this time let me try to have a glimpse of Shiva. So, I sent Swami Niranjan a message saying, "Yes, I am ready for the program. Let it run for one full month during November and December, the month of Marga Shirsha." This month is the purest, greatest and most significant of all the months.

How to entice Lord Shiva

Now, for this one month I will be trying to materialize Lord Shiva. I am using the word 'materialize' because he is already

present, but we are unable to see him. How can it be done? By singing Rama's name. My mantra is not Sri Rama, Jaya Rama, Jaya Jaya Rama. So now we will all repeat the name of Rama, the whole atmosphere will repeat Rama, Rama, Rama, this mango tree will repeat Rama, Rama, Rama, the mikes will repeat Rama, Rama, Rama, the video camera will repeat Rama, Rama, Rama, day and night will repeat Rama, Rama, Rama. Shivaji is a Bholebaba, an innocent Lord, and he gets caught very easily. Shivaji is not a very shrewd person, he is a very simple man.

Just give him a little bhang, say, "Sit down, please sign my file", and he will do it. But he doesn't accept tips, nor does he get involved in scams. He is a very pure man. Sprinkle him with a little water, the leaves of the bel tree or a little bhasma, or just visit his temple; that's more than enough for him. He doesn't want purity. He doesn't care if you are high or low caste, Muslim or Hindu, vegetarian or non-vegetarian. He doesn't care whether you drink or not. He doesn't care what sort of life you lead. He needs pure bhakti; even if you pose as a bhakta he gets caught. However, I am not doing that. I am very sincere and it is with this idea that this Ram Naam Aradhana festival has been arranged. Therefore, you must understand the significance.

I have my own way of putting things across. People say that this Ram Naam Aradhana is to entertain God, but I say it is to entice God. Poor Shiva is so gullible that he gets caught. Unlike Krishna, who manages to wriggle out, Shiva can be hooked very easily. If you pour cold water over him in the cold season, he is propitiated even more easily. He cannot stand warm water. These Bombayites bathe with hot water even in summer when the temperature is 30 to 40 degrees Centigrade. Shiva is just the opposite. He is pleased to be sprinkled with cold water. He is propitiated by the bel leaf. For him there are no prohibitions on fish, chicken or meat, smoking or drinking.

Very soon we will have Sikhs singing bhajans here. They are *ragis*. On that day I will also observe certain rules. I, too, have had clothes made to wear on that day. Actually I do not

wear clothing but on that particular day I will wear clothes and headgear to observe and respect their tradition. They have certain rules – no cigarettes, bidis or khaini. If you have bidis or cigarettes leave them in your hotels. Lord Shiva eats betel nuts and leaves. In fact all our gods and goddesses eat betel nuts and leaves. *Taamboolam samarpayaami; Poogiphalam samarpayaami* – “I offer betel leaves and nuts in worship.” Tobacco is taboo. God does not eat tobacco. They say tobacco chewing leads to cancer of the mouth.

Lord Rama – the ideal man

I have to tell you one more thing. I was born into a *kshatriya* family, the caste of warriors, in the lineage of Ikshvaku, Rama’s family line. Therefore, if I have a special affinity for Lord Rama, it is only natural. I love everything about him and his extraordinary life: his self-control, poise, restraint, culture, civility, manner of affection and enmity, stance and attitude towards his enemies. Lord Rama is a model for humanity and everyone should emulate him.

As a boy I worshipped Lord Rama as my hero. All children look for a model, an ideal, to emulate. If you ask children how they would like their parents to be, out of fear they will keep quiet, but they look up to their parents as their role models. Parents have to live up to their children’s expectations and be their models. Whenever the models fall short of the ideal, then children do not listen to their parents. A father drinks and counsels his son that drinking is bad. As a consequence children flout their parents.

In childhood I, too, needed a model. I looked but found no one. I was educated at a convent but I chose Rama as my model. Shiva’s clothes are tattered, his hair matted and unkempt. He has no need for clothes. His ways are wild. His speech is devoid of charm. His companions are uncouth. What sort of a model would he make? Can you emulate Shiva? Can you wear a tiger skin? No! Could you wear a dhoti like Lord Rama? Yes! You can also wear *pitambar*, a yellow silk dhoti, like him. Everyone would like to wear beautiful clothing like Lord Rama.

Lord Shiva takes bhang – *Bam Bam Mahadev, Alakh Niranjan!* Great souls used to say that in the old akharas. Can Alakh Niranjan be a model for people? Can they emulate Shiva's example? Society needs a model, an ideal, and that is Lord Rama. He is the universal model for all times and for all the people of the world: Africans, Americans, Britishers, Australians, Chinese, Russians, Germans. Rama is a model for everyone. There may be a controversy about Lord Krishna, but Rama is indisputable.

Unique relationship of Rama and Shiva

In childhood I chose Rama as my ideal, but when I was initiated into sannyasa I got caught in the Shaiva tradition. So for me it was like a man loving two women at the same time. Whom to marry? My guru told me to marry both. I wondered how and he suggested I make Lord Rama my ishta devata and Lord Shiva my ishta mantra. Since then I've been chanting *Om Namah Shivaya* and meditating on Lord Rama. People think God may be displeased with this, but He never gets annoyed. When Shiva saw me chanting his name and meditating on Rama, he said, "Very good." And when Lord Rama came to know that I meditate on him but chant Lord Shiva's mantra, he said, "Fine, fine." There was perfect understanding between the two of them. When two girls can agree, then what problem can arise for the boy in marrying both of them?

This year I decided I had been chanting this mantra for a long time without knowing who Shiva is. Is he Somnath, Pashupatinath, Baidyanath, Vishwanath, or Mrityunjaya, the Lord of Trayambakeshwar? I wanted to know who he is, what he looks like? So I thought, let me have an interview with Shiva. I must have *sakshatkar*, his mystic vision. I was trying to discover how this could happen when this method came to my mind.

Both Lord Shiva and Lord Rama are mutual friends, devotees, bhaktas and disciples. They admire and love each other and they surrender to each other. Rama thinks of Shiva continuously and Shiva meditates on Rama. Shiva does

japa of Rama's name and Rama chants the name of Shiva. Shiva follows Rama everywhere; he also attended Rama's wedding. Shiva was present when Rama was playing in the courtyard of King Dasharatha and even when Rama was born. This is told in the story of Kakabhushundi. This is the state of affairs between them. Shiva was present for Rama's coronation ceremony as well.

Shiva has come to visit Rama many times, including this present occasion. We have many visitors coming here from different towns, villages, cities, countries, from Alakapuri to Indra loka. There are Menakas, Urvashis, Kuberas, Varunas, Maruts and all the other visitors from Indra loka. So Shiva should also come, but how to lure him here? He must be lying somewhere under the influence of bhang. He is always in an intoxicated state, forever free from anxiety and worry. He is least worried by how many meet death and how many thrive or survive.

Once Shiva's son, Kartikeya, was carried away by flood waters. Kartikeya was to be the commander-in-chief of the army of the gods under the name of Skanda. In South India the names given to him are Skanda Murugaharohara, Skanda Saravanabhava. The story goes that as a child Kartikeya was carried away by flood waters and Shiva did not even know about it. He was wondering where Skanda had gone. When he was told that floods had carried Skanda away, he remained unaffected. Perhaps he thought, I will beget another child and yet another. Begetting a child is not a problem; even a dozen could be born to him.

Therefore, I thought, I must catch Shiva by his weak point, and Shiva's weak point is Rama. His own offspring are not his weak point. So I decided on this Ram Naam Aradhana. And everyone who was invited to this occasion responded very well. They did not mind the hardship of coming here from the most distant corners of the world; they have taken pains to travel here to respect my invitation.

In between programs I try to amuse and entertain you all and make you laugh, because I think you are used to some spicy chutney in your meals. I put that chutney in,

but if you like simple meals I can also give a simple lecture on Vedanta without any pickle or tangy chutney and spices. I can speak on atma, paramatma, Tattwamasi and so on for hours on end because I am well-versed in the classical scriptures. But, I thought, you cannot eat your rotis without any chutney, so I said, “Oh well, let me put some chutney, some spice in their diet.” And, mind you, some spice is also necessary. But the point is that you should recognize the sincerity of my purpose and feeling in having this Ram Naam Aradhana.

If you can get a glimpse of Shiva in any state, waking, dreaming, half awake, conscious, subconscious, meditative or any other, even for a fraction of a second, like a quick shaft of lightning, your life will become blessed and fruitful. After that, it does not matter if you die or live on. The ultimate achievement in a man’s life is to have the darshan of God. Who is Shiva? What is his form? Does he have a human body? Is he only pure consciousness? Some say Shiva is half man, half woman; he is bisexual so he has assumed the form of *Ardhanarishwara*.

People have conceptualized Shiva as half male and half female and that is his real form. I believe that is the truth about him because we are all half-male and half-female. Not one man amongst us is a complete man, nor one woman a complete woman. We are all half-male and half-female, fifty-fifty. This is ida, that is pingala; this is Ganga that is Yamuna; this is ham, that is tham; this is sympathetic, that is parasympathetic. We are a combination of Prakriti and Purusha, but we are trying to get rid of Prakriti and just become that resplendent Purusha.

Prakriti is maya, action and reaction. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (13:20) it says, *Kaaryakaaranakartritve hetuh prakritiruchyate* – “Prakriti exists to get things done.” Prakriti makes us do everything. We act to release ourselves from the clutches of Prakriti, to realize our original pure conscious state, to become a complete human being. Except for mahatmas, wise people, realized souls, all others live in this duality of Prakriti and Purusha.

Find God in suffering humanity

What is the form of Shiva? In which form should we worship him? I am ready to see Shiva in any form and to see him I have used the means of Rama's name. But in addition to Rama's name I have also adopted one more means. Look for him from house to house. You never know, he may be found in the guise of a poor man, a blind man, a sick man, a miserable widow, a starving person or a naked destitute fellow. You cannot predict anything about him. Does gold originate in a goldsmith's shop? Does a diamond originate in a jeweller's shop? It is sold there but does it originate there? Just as gold does not originate in a goldsmith's shop nor diamonds in a jewellery shop, similarly Lord Shiva is not found only in temples. He does live in temples, but his real presence can be discovered in anything and anybody.

Eknath Maharaj was carrying water from Gangotri in the north to Rameshwaram in the south, as was the tradition. In those days they would walk the whole distance, which was a long and arduous journey. Just before he reached the temple of Rameshwaram he saw a donkey dying of thirst. At that moment he was in a dilemma about whether to quench the donkey's thirst with the Ganga water or to offer it to the Lord in the temple. The Lord told him that even the donkey was a form of Himself. Lord Shiva is not a donkey, but a starving, dying donkey should be looked upon as a form of Lord Shiva.

Try to see God in suffering humanity. This is the duty of saints, sages and holy men, as well as householders. It is the duty of humanity. Today there is so much pain and misery everywhere because God is not seen where He actually is, in suffering humanity. Therefore, your spiritual endeavour will fail. You will find peace of mind in the temples, but that is not the ultimate in life.

Peace of mind is very private and personal; it is not the ultimate goal of human life. As long as the world, society, the cities, towns and villages are not peaceful, the Earth will not enjoy peace. That is why the ancient rishis, munis, seers and thinkers have found *shanti*, peace, everywhere and not only

in temples. *Dyauh shaantih, aantariksham shaantih* – “Sky be peaceful, atmosphere be peaceful.” When you visit a temple you get personal peace. When you go for darshan of Swami Satyananda you feel very happy. This is good, but it is a very personal thing.

Personal shanti may be an aim, but it cannot be your ultimate aim in life. You have to search for that peace which surpasses all understanding and which embraces every living creature. You have to search for God. You have to find Him in the alleys, lanes and houses. So, I told the swamis to visit all the houses and look after the people there. I told them not to go empty-handed. You never know, the Lord may be hiding in any house. So, take blankets with you, take saris for the womenfolk, take jeans or dhotis for the men, take toys for the children, take a few pots and pans, even aluminium will do.

To meet Him, to see Him

God is very sensitive. He is listening to all my talk and for all we know He may be talking to all of you through me. His maya is strange. He is the listener and He is also the speaker. He is the wanderer, the wayfarer, the mendicant. He is also the talker, the mover, the motivator. He Himself is the doer; it is all His lila. This is the main object and purpose of this Ram Naam Aradhana – to meet Him, to see Him. O Shiva, what is your form? How can you be seen? Come in any disguise, as a beggar or singer, a man, woman or child. Visit us in any form but do come, even for only a moment, like the click of a camera, will do.

It is not necessary to see God for one or two hours. When Lord Krishna showed Arjuna his cosmic form, Arjuna’s mind boggled (*Bhagavad Gita* 11:45): *Bhayena cha pravratitam mano me* – “God, I’m so frightened.” Remember that if you are confronted by the form of Lord Shiva with matted hair from which the Ganga flows, adorned with a serpent around his neck, high-browed, three-eyed, riding a bull to the cremation ground, you will be terrified and cry out, “O God, no, no! Let me see your ordinary form.”

It is with this attitude, faith and belief that this Ram Naam Aradhana is being celebrated here. For the whole month I am going to emphasize this point, that the repetition of the name of Rama pleases Shiva. It is always said that Rama's name should be repeated in Deoghar and *Om Namah Shivaya* in Ayodhya. In Ayodhya repeat Shiva's name and Rama will be pleased; in Deoghar repeat Rama's name and Shiva will be pleased.

When I came to Rikhia the villagers greeted me by saying, "Pranam, Swamiji." I said to them, "*Namo Narayana*." Today all the children of our *panchayat*, our village council, chant only one mantra – *Namo Narayana*. In the whole of their lives they have never uttered *Om Namah Shivaya*. That shows how simple and innocent these people are. They are a very unhappy and unlucky lot. Society, the elders, the government have all betrayed them, but their children say, "*Namo Narayana*." When passing this way while walking along the road, they say, "*Namo Narayana*."

Spirituality of the arts

In South India, children in every home are given lessons in music and dance from a very early age. Unlike us, every child would have *swara jnana*, knowledge of the swara. Here our children start learning late, at the age of eight, ten or twelve. In South India, the mother gives her children lessons in music and dance while they are still quite young because people believe in it there. It is only now that people in the West are accepting the spirituality of the arts. Previously they thought that music and dance were the best means of entertainment. We do not think like this. We consider music and dance to be a means of worshipping and pleasing God. In the West, music and dance are seen as the best means of entertainment and now this concept is invading India.

It is necessary to teach our children classical dance and music from childhood. If they are not given proper lessons in music and dance in their childhood, when they grow up they will take up that very music and dance which you disapprove of. But what is the use of approving or

disapproving? There is no other alternative left. If you give them proper training and expose them to classical music and dance in childhood, then as they grow up no cultural current, no music of a lesser type can influence them. Any culture will have its impact on you only if you have a void in your life, otherwise it is not possible.

Music and dance are fine arts. Music has had its origin in the *Sama Veda* from time immemorial. By mistake Sama was spelt ‘psalm’, but it is still pronounced ‘saam’. *Sama* means *richa*, or hymns. The *Sama Veda* contains hymns. The *richas* of the *Rig Veda*, when sung to a tune, become the *Sama Veda*. In English it is called psalm.

Language of dance

Dance has a primordial origin. Dance is Shiva himself. There are many books on dance in our classical literature, the most authentic being Bharatnatyam, the Natyashastra of Bharatji in the Sanskrit language. Yesterday the performers in the dance concert communicated through dance. Dance is a language not of words but of *mudras*, or gestures. When I ask you, “Have you eaten?” you answer, “No.” This is the language of words, but the language of dance and music is symbolic. It is a codified language in which communication takes place through music and gestures, postures and *mudras*.

When language takes the form of dance, it becomes a *mudra*. Dance is a language without words. Yesterday the dancer showed us through the use of *mudras* that she was applying sindoor, performing worship and arati – even Hanuman’s tail was shown. The performing artist conveys everything through dance, just as I am telling you now in words. Dance is a language not of words but of feeling and moods. It is the language of the heart, which man can grasp whole-heartedly with full concentration.

Many *mudras* are employed in dance. The way the dancers dress is not just putting on clothes, but a very methodical, meticulous ritual. There are certain rules prescribed for all this. The Kathakali dancers paint their

faces according to the classical system and it takes them half a day to do it. I used to mix the paint for the Kathakali dance. When they take as long as half a day to dress up for a show, I was wondering how they would manage here. I was told that they would arrive fully dressed and ready for the stage performance. They take two and a half to three hours to get ready. Dressing for the dance is a ritual in itself. You don't just put on any old thing and start dancing. What particular attire has to be worn in which dance has been clearly enumerated in the books on Natyashastra. All the do's and don'ts are given in the classical texts.

Good samskaras abide

In our country the have-nots are preoccupied with the problem of their own subsistence. They have to slog the whole day through for a hand to mouth existence. The haves, the well-off people, are after more money. So who has the time for such fine pursuits? But a culture and a nation rest on the foundation of the fine arts. A country should not be known by how much money it has, but by what culture it has. A person should not be known by how rich he is, but by how cultured he is. When you want your daughter to get married, you do not only look for a rich family, for money, but also ask about the culture and character of the bridegroom. Even if the family has plenty of money but the boy is a drunkard, you do not give your daughter in marriage to such a boy.

Culture depends upon a person's samskaras. Money comes and goes but good samskaras abide. Wherever there is power there is conceit; it cannot be avoided. And wherever there is wealth, addiction inevitably follows in tow. Addiction is inseparable from riches, whereas compassion is associated with good samskaras. Introversion, civility, *viveka*, a good sense of discrimination and the ability to make correct decisions, come with good samskaras. *Kim kartavyam kim akartavyam* – “What should be done and what should not be done is decided by one's samskaras.”

From the time of the Vedas to the present day, India

has perfected only one thing and that is imbibing good samskaras. If good samskaras disappear from your family and from my family, then what is left? Will you cherish television? No, we want good samskaras. The progressive refinement of personality, stage by stage, is known as good samskara. These samskaras are based on religion, on the teachings of great souls, saints and sages, as well as on cultural traditions such as dance and fine arts. Saints and sages, divine people, are the life force of our nation. There are no two opinions about this.

Although there may be cheats and scoundrels even among sadhus (both Kalanemi and Ravana posed as sadhus), divine people are the foundation of a society. Therefore, saintly people should not be too exposed; they should have a low profile. From high up you can never see the foundations of a house. You can see the balcony, the windows and the walls but the foundations lie hidden from view. In our country and tradition, we think that saintly people are the foundation of the culture.

Satsang 4

November 28, 1996

When Lord Rama was just sixteen years of age, he travelled with Vishwamitra, a guru, across the Ganga in the north of Bihar. On his way he encountered a very desolate place that seemed to have been an ashram at one time. He said to Vishwamitra, "This seems to be a very nice place but it is deserted. What is the matter?" So, Vishwamitra narrated the tragic story of Ahalya, a woman who had been turned to stone by the curse of her husband. Rama touched that rock with his feet, and she was resurrected. She became her own self, a beautiful lady, freed from the curse of her husband.

About eight years later, Lord Rama was exiled by his father, who was under pressure from his third wife. Rama left the kingdom of Ayodhya with his wife, Sita, and his younger brother, Lakshman, to live in the forest for fourteen years. If you travel south from Ayodhya you encounter the Ganga, and when you cross the Ganga you come to Prayag, which is Allahabad. When Lord Rama arrived at the Ganga he wanted to cross the river, but the boatman refused, saying, "No, no, no. I am not going to take you on the boat." Rama said, "What's the matter? Why not?"

The boatman replied, "I've heard that when you touched a stone, it became a beautiful lady. My boat is

made out of wood. If you touch my boat it, too, might become a lady and then how shall I earn my livelihood? So I am not going to take you on my boat.” Rama said, “But we want to cross to the other side. What can we do?” The boatman replied, “Oh, there’s a way out. I will wash your feet first because I have heard that whatever the dust of your feet touches comes alive. I don’t want the transformation of my boat.”

This is the beautiful and moving story which was sung just now. It is a story that every Indian knows, sings and aspires for – that the dust of the feet of Lord Rama will resurrect, elevate and completely transform your life.

Music – universal expression

The conditions and circumstances of your life fashion your emotions, and those emotions are projected through music. Rich people sing differently because their emotions are different to those who are poor, who have difficulty in life, who are struggling and trying to assert themselves. The conditions of life fashion the emotions and those emotions are projected in music. In the music of the lower classes there is no barrier; it is unsophisticated music. Sophistication in music is created by rich cultures where people have a lot of money, big houses, many comforts, good food to eat and maximum security.

Otherwise music is a natural expression of human beings. It is a natural expression of the universe. The birds sing, the trees sing and sometimes the wind sings so much that it becomes a cyclone! When simple people sing it touches the heart. When others sing it does not touch the heart, it touches the head. So it is said that music is born out of a person’s circumstances in life. In some people’s lives there is suffering and their music expresses this suffering. In some music there is artistry, in other music there is frivolity.

The music that you hear today does not spring from a pure heart. When man’s heart is innocent and childlike, whatever he sings is blessed. When Lord Krishna played his flute it disturbed the gopi’s meditation. When these village

women sing at night I listen and my meditation is disturbed. The village music is very melodious and meaningful. When they bid farewell to their daughter or welcome her back home or when somebody dies or is born – oh, the music!

Perhaps that is the best music and it has been going on for hundreds and thousands of years. These illiterate ladies remember everything by heart and, surprisingly, if you ask them, “Today, what day of the moon is it?” they will be able to tell you. Educated people will not be able to tell you that today is *chaturthi*, the fourth day, but these women keep track of the astronomical position of the moon and the stars. I was surprised at this. Even I read the lunar calendar from the *Panchanga*, that it is *chaturthi* or *panchami*, the fifth day, but they know without reading it. They can read the position of the moon and stars although they have not been educated.

Life of Sri Rama

Rama is the darling of this land. His name has come down through history, a name that represents the name of God. Those of you who do not know the story will have to read about the life of Sri Rama. He was born into the family of an emperor who, according to the historians, ruled over the whole continent many thousands of years before Christ. He was the eldest of four brothers who were born of three mothers. Rama was the son of the eldest queen. The second queen also had a son, named Bharat. This queen was very beautiful and accomplished and the king loved her very much. The youngest queen had twins, Lakshman and Satrugna.

Dasharatha, his three queens and their sons are the basis of the story of the *Ramayana*. Sri Rama is the hero of the story. His life, behaviour, responses and reactions were all divine. All of you should read the *Ramacharitamanas* written by Tulsidas. It has been translated into all the languages of the world. Films have also been made of it. The Japanese and the Russians have made films on the life of Sri Rama. I asked a philosopher from Japan what made the Japanese

adopt Rama as their hero. He said, “Because his life is a guide to our generation. Rama and Sita represent an ideal which our generation lacks today.”

Avoid bad company

You have to be very careful about the company and associations you keep, the people with whom you live, because they influence you. *Satsang* is the company of good people. *Kusang* is the company of evil people. If you associate with evil people, your mind, your family, your prosperity and ultimately your whole country will be destroyed. History bears evidence of such events where people cared more for evil or negative suggestions.

So, in your personal life, from now on you should reflect whether the people you are dealing with are of a positive nature. Are they people with divine, serene minds or are they malicious and evil? The choice is entirely yours and on that choice depends your destiny. Destiny and karma are both the same. Destiny is created by karma and karma is created by *satsang* and *kusang*, good associations and bad. To illustrate this there is a beautiful episode, and a very important one, in which Rama, who had been chosen for coronation as emperor, was instead exiled by his father.

It had been decided that Rama, the heir apparent, would ascend the throne of Ayodhya to become the emperor of the subcontinent of South Asia. Then the order came for his exile for fourteen years. This young man of eighteen was the darling of his father and was also loved by the king's beautiful third queen. She loved Rama very much but because of the bad company she kept, her mind changed. So Queen Kaikeyi became the villain of this game, although she was such a good-natured lady. The *Ramayana* says that she loved Rama more than his mother Kaushalya did. Why did she change overnight? Not because she was bad, but because she kept bad company.

Therefore, you should live very carefully. It is not enough to be good; it is also necessary that your company be good. If you take a kilo of milk and put just one drop of lemon into

it, what happens? Just one drop of lemon destroys all the milk. Similarly, an evil companion, an evil suggestion, will destroy your whole life, your family, everything. The effect of good company is just the reverse. Even if you are hopeless, bad and evil, if you move with good company, everybody will respect you.

Look at me. Who is more crooked, more of a rascal than me? But everybody worships me because I kept the company of sadhus and mahatmas. I did not choose a film star as my idol, I chose Swami Sivananda to be the hero of my life. I am his fan, not the fan of a film star, a politician, a rich man or a beautiful lady. I'm the fan of Swami Sivananda, therefore, I kept good company all the time. I read the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Upanishads, the Bible, the Koran, the Torah, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Anandamayi Ma and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. So I kept company with good books, with good men, with good food and with everything which is good. Therefore, this bad man is considered to be a good man.

So if you are a bad man, please keep the company of good people and if you are a good man, please be careful of bad people. There is a saying:

Jaake priya na Raam-vaidehee

Tajiya taahi koti vairee sama yadyapi parama samahee.

This means that even if the bad influence is your own husband or wife or child or friend, whosoever he may be, although you may love him very much, renounce him, leave him, reject him, dismiss him. Throw him out of your life and you'll be safe. Or would you prefer to keep a cobra in your pocket?

Kirtan

In the *Ramacharitamanas* it is proclaimed, "Who will get the darshan of the Lord, who will have his mystic vision and who will attain liberation? It is the one who sings His name in kirtan." The means is kirtan. The Lord, too, has names like Rama, Govinda and so on. If the same

name is sung and repeated again and again in a variety of melodious ways, it becomes kirtan. In this Kali yuga the glory and power of kirtan is emphasized. It is also good to sing bhajans. It gives you knowledge of God because He is praised and described. The mind, too, is elevated, but if you want His mystic vision then the means is the magic of kirtan. In Uttarakand of *Ramacharitamanas* it is clearly written what kirtan does in Kali yuga. The Lord inspires us to sing His name. There is joy in it, but besides this there is total concentration. When the mind gets totally engrossed, when the atma and paramatma connect and become united, that is kirtan.

Divine gleanings

The Alakh Bara is a place where you will lose all your common sense. I have Devi there in the mandap. I do pooja in Ganesha Kutir. I'll go just now at five or a quarter to five, just before sunset. I'll do arati to Tulsi and then go to Raghunath and Ganesha. In Ganesha Kutir I make tea for Ganeshji at one-thirty in the morning and also take some myself. Well, this is the tradition.

I'm not a madman, but I have to believe the things that happen before my eyes. Lakshmi came one day, two or three years ago, and she said, "Satyananda, as long as you do not misuse me or use me for yourself, I'll be with you." She gave me a blank chequebook, so whenever I want to I sign a cheque and give it to those who need it. But, of course, I am not a spendthrift. I heard her voice, "Take care of your neighbours as I have taken care of you." It was not a hallucination; I heard it. I do not experience strange psychological states. I'm a perfectly normal person, but what can I do when I hear something and what I hear happens?

This year I started constructing Christ Kutir. No ashram in India has ever built a Christ Kutir. Maybe, if Christ wishes, I will make it a dazzling kutir. Money is no problem. I'm not asking you to give any money to God; He has more money than you do. In fact, it is He who has given you all

the money that you have, thinking that you are a trustee. So spend some time in Christ Kutir and those of you who will be here on 25th December can sing carols. We will have a traditional Christmas, just as we have Vijaya Dashami, Shivaratri and Durga Pooja.

What is satsang?

I have already told you about good and bad company and what satsang is. You can achieve good company, first of all, by unity and communion with God. That is the first definition of satsang, communion with God. When you want communion, do you try to limit God within the framework of a concept? No. Religion and philosophy may talk about God in different ways, but the God which Christians, Hindus, Jews and everyone else worship is One. There are not two gods, three gods, four gods or five gods. He is only One and to commune with that God you commune through the whole of creation, the whole universe. You should not confine your awareness of God to a particular sect. God brings a total transformation in your mind and heart.

The second definition of satsang is to keep company with good literature: the Vedas, Upanishads, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Srimad Bhagavatam*, Bible, Koran, Torah and many other scriptures. Then there is the literature of Sri Aurobindo, Swami Sivananda and others. There are hundreds and thousands of such books. You should make it a point to dive deep into such literature. Then the third definition of satsang is keeping company with saints, sages, mahatmas and wise men who do not have any obligation to a sect, but are universal in nature and philosophy.

When you have satsang it will transform you. Evil company makes a good person bad. As I told you, Kaikeyi, the beautiful queen of Dasharatha, was a great, good and gentle lady. She loved Rama much more than Rama's own mother did, but because of the evil company of her maid, Manthara, she made such a blunder that the whole of Ayodhya was grief-stricken. Rama, Sita and Lakshman had to be banished from the kingdom.

It is not necessary to be a good person in order to have satsang. You may be a wretched person, an incarnation or a symbol of evil, it doesn't matter. Through satsang a transformation definitely takes place. The importance of satsang is that even the most unholy, most untouchable being becomes worthy of respect, worship and honour.

Satsang 5

December 3, 1996

Which Rama do you worship? One Rama is the son of Dasharatha, another Rama is the indweller of our hearts, yet another Rama is the creator of the cosmos and yet another Rama is transcendental. The easiest, quickest, safest and best is the Rama who is the son of Dasharatha. If you go after the transcendental Rama, you might lose sight of the path. You do not know the fully charted path of the transcendental highway, so you might get lost. Just one degree south and you are in Antarctica, one degree north and you are in the Arctic instead of in London. Yes, this amazing spectacle of the world is created by Rama, and that Rama is in me and I am in him.

Music and dance

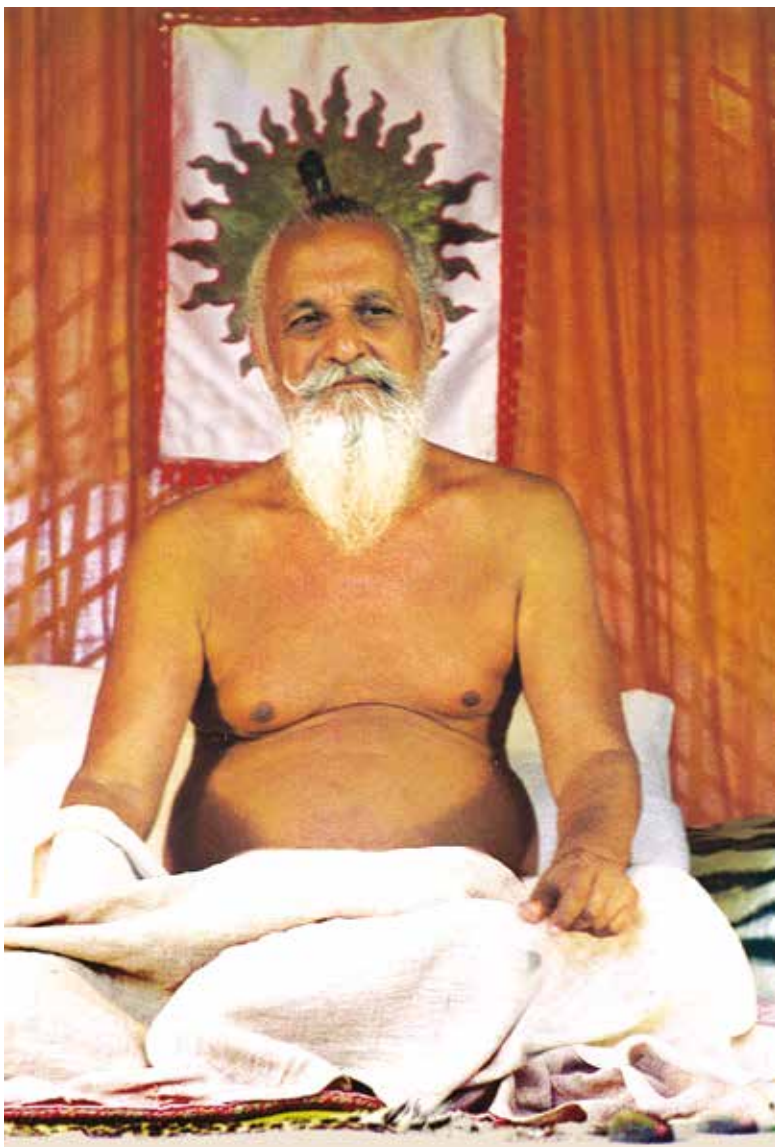
I learned music and dance at an early age. Music brought me to dance. I like dancing very much because Lord Shiva dances and Parvati also dances. Shiva is the father of all dancers, including Michael Jackson! He is the father of all the dance traditions: Odissi, Kuchipudi, Kathak, Kathakali, Mohiniattakam. Parvati perfected folk dance. We believe that dance is close to spiritual life and, therefore, you should teach your children to dance. Don't stop your little ones from dancing, even break-dancing is all right.

Dance is never vulgar, it is always pure. Music is always pure. Even if milk curdles it is still milk, it is not impure just because it is curdled. Similarly, dance is still dance no matter what form it takes and, therefore, it should not be condemned. Music should not be discouraged either, irrespective of its style and form. All music is essentially devotional. Even cinema music is devotional because the mind becomes immersed in it. The husk falls off and is discarded outside and the kernel remains intact within. Swami Niranjan knows all types of dance, modern as well as classical forms. Swami Satsangi has a collection of modern music, including Negro spirituals. She has kept all these and listens to them. So go ahead and listen to all kinds of music without any reservations.

All music is founded on the seven basic notes of *sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni, sa*. Teach music and dance to your children. Whatever they are in this life: rich or poor, brahmin or shudra, Christian or Buddhist, it makes no difference. Music will affect them positively. They will become beautiful, tender and sensitive and their mental frequencies will become very high. If you don't expose them to music, they will all end up being bookworms.

Swami Niranjan: Shabari was a tribal lady. Her guru told her that one day Rama would come to her doorstep. Hearing this, she was so overwhelmed with joy and happiness that initially she could not say anything. But then she asked certain questions: "I am by caste one of the down-trodden. How can I touch and worship the feet of Sri Rama? I have never performed any acts of charity. I have never taken a bath in the river Ganga to purify myself. I have never had darshan of any god or goddess. I have never been to a temple or on a pilgrimage. How can I, a down-trodden one, deserve to have darshan of the Lord?" These were the questions that Shabari put to her guru, and our guru is going to give us the answer.

Sri Swamiji: God's feet touch everything and everywhere. God is present everywhere. You don't have to be born



Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Sri Swamiji fanning the Holy Guru Granth Sahib



Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Chanting of evening prayer

into a high caste, you don't have to be a sannyasin or a good person. To reach God you need neither a certificate nor virtue. Whatever you are, whether a thief, a robber, a dacoit, a rascal, a drunkard, Hindu or Muslim, virtuous or debauched, the Lord's feet are available to everybody. Only one thing is necessary and that is intense love for God. What is the dearest thing in this world? By what means can you forget yourself? That is the only requirement. If only you could have this intense love for God in your heart, that would be enough.

You have the example of Shabari, but the best example is sitting in front of you right now. Who could be more vicious and covetous than me? I am not a simple, virtuous man. I have twisted the heads of the smartest guys. Not a single habit of mine is good. I was not born into a brahmin family. I was born into a family that considered drinking, non-vegetarian food and even womanizing to be acceptable. But I always thought of one thing only – how I could set all that aside and just remember the name of God. Let all eating, drinking and sleeping go to hell!

I have lived my life in joy and contentment. The last moment too will be joyful. When I leave the body I will not go by government bus. I will go on a direct flight by jumbo jet in first class – no visas, transit passage interruptions or stopovers. I won't be stopping at Tehran, London, Hamburg or anywhere else. From here I will go straight to the destination. I won't stop at Brihaspati loka, Yama loka, Bhairav loka, Chakra loka, this or that loka. I will go direct to my destination.

Return ticket

Yes, I have taken a return ticket because I want to come back. What for?

*Na tvaham kaamayē raajyam na svargam na punarbhavam
Kaamayē duhkhataptaanaam praaninaam aartinaashanam.*

I don't want a kingdom, pleasures and comforts, freedom from birth and death. I just want to be able to help people who are in distress – not only mental or physical distress, but the practical distress which lies in your kitchen, bedroom and bathroom, if you have those amenities. Thousands and thousands of people all over the world are suffering. My neighbours are suffering, but nobody thinks about this.

You think about peace. Let shanti be put aside. What will you do with shanti? Peace is a very private thing. If you attain peace, what does it matter to the rest of the world? You attain peace and you alone are happy. We remain in distress and we cry. What state of affairs is that? No, it is better not to have peace when there is misery all around me. I do not care for freedom from the cycle of birth and death either! I want to take birth life after life, again and again. That is why I am going with a return ticket.

God said, "Son, if you want a return ticket, then you will have to pay for double fare." I replied, "I will pay not only double but even triple the cost." That is why I sat surrounded by fires for five years. It was an impossible feat for me. Today when I think back on it, I wonder how I ever managed to sit in a temperature of 80 degrees Centigrade! Did you ever visit me in Munger? My air-conditioner would be on as soon as the temperature went above 25 degrees Centigrade. I had central air-conditioning, even my bathroom was air-conditioned! I feel so hot when the temperature rises above 25 degrees Centigrade; I am like a fish out of water. But in Mount Abu a mahatma told me to undergo whatever I found the hardest to bear. For me, the most unbearable thing was heat.

God told me to read the *Ramayana* non-stop for twenty-four hours. I said to God, "Why only twenty-four hours? I can go on even for a whole year if you say so. Whatever you command me to do I will do, but I must have a return ticket." A return ticket is given to two sets of people, either to those who are steeped in sin and whose karma is full to the brim, or to those who volunteer to come back of their own sweet will.

Resurrect the divinity

Always remember that God is never far from you. I find that most people look for God by way of compromise. Remember, God should be dearer to you than the dearest. You don't have to give up anything for God. It is not necessary to leave your home, good food, daily work or anything else.

There is a song that I heard in 1956, forty years ago, during my mendicant days. I heard this song in Navada district when I was wandering through South Bihar as a *bhikshu* and I liked it very much.

*How could I touch the feet of God?
I am only an uncultured tribal.
I have not donated a cow,
Nor have I bathed in the Ganga,
Neither have I undertaken pilgrimages,
Nor any yogic sadhana.*

This is not only the song of the tribals, it is our song as well. We are all tribals. All of us sitting here are from the jungles. We are savages, cannibals, we eat other humans. We do not drink human blood but we slowly suck the life out of others. We are all savages, demons. We are not gods and we are not deities. Godliness is lying dormant within us, but it is almost dead. If you want to resurrect the divinity within you, there is only one way: name. You may not believe in God. You may question the existence of Rama, Krishna or Shiva, but I am not talking about God, I am talking about name. "In the beginning was the word". Name is the beginning. What was primordial in creation? Name. Therefore, the name of God and God Himself are two different things.

I am not telling you to forsake the path of pooja, to stop all worship, reading and reciting. But whenever you find time, sit and chant the name of God. It may be for one or two or three hours. Whenever there is time, repeat the name of God. Do anushthana for nine days, three days, even one day would do. You can also do an anushthana for one full

year if you wish, but that is it. This is the only way through which you tribals, you savages will become free.

Distribution of cows

Now for prasad. Please bring the recipient forward. Have you ever kept a cow?

Villager: Yes, a small cow but she does not give milk.

Sri Swamiji: All right. This cow will give milk as well as a calf. Serve her well. She gives two litres more than they tell you because we keep a person throughout the day to tend her. He massages her neck and her legs. When the cow sees that we are serving her well she is pleased with us, and thinks, "Oh, these people work so hard for me, I must give them a commission of one litre of milk." Therefore, fawn upon the cow a little bit, pamper her and Lakshmi will enter your house. But I have made a condition which you will have to fulfil before you receive a cow. Someone from your family must come here to learn how to look after her. They have to come morning and evening for one full month to learn about the diseases affecting cows.

We purchase two or three cows, then select two or three people from the village and see whether they can keep a cow. Some basic facilities are required to look after a cow. They must have a cowshed and the means to provide fodder. Then a member of the family must come here twice a day for one month. They are taught everything, including milking and cleaning, for an hour in the morning. In the course of time I am also going to introduce a gobar gas plant so that they can create their own fuel for cooking.

All deities dwell in the cow

One cow that was brought here was declared to be giving ten litres of milk, but actually she gives fifteen. She gives so much milk that we can even bathe ourselves in it. Keeping a cow is not like keeping a goat or a ram and employing a servant to raise it. You must try to look after your cow yourself and if you can't do that then at least spend a little time each day caring for her. Why? Because she is your

mother and her milk brings abundance to your life. In India there is the tradition of feeding the cow. Before each meal the lady of the house will first feed the cow a morsel made up of all the food she has cooked for her family and then the rest of the family will sit down to eat. The cow is the abode of all deities; all deities dwell in her.

Another important point is that all waste matter is toxic, wherever it comes from, be it human, chemical, industrial or nuclear waste. The only waste matter that is not toxic is the waste from a cow. There are no bacteria, infections or worms in a cow's waste matter that could harm you. All other living beings excrete waste matter that is highly toxic. Everything in the world creates waste matter which is poisonous and hazardous to health. No waste matter in the world is safe except that of the cow. There is only one living being whose stool and urine are edible and drinkable. If you do not believe me, try to sweep and polish your houses with your own human excreta, just as is done daily in the villages with cow dung, and see what happens.

Therefore, when a cow's waste matter or excreta is so pure, can you imagine how pure and clean that creature must be? The cow is the most holy of animals; she is called, 'holy cow'. For the villagers two things are important: water and a cow. There would be no poverty or starvation if we just had water and a cow. The government opens schools and colleges, which is useless. People die of starvation but nobody sends water, nobody installs taps, nobody makes canals, nobody digs tube wells. There are primary health centres and people go there as victims of starvation; they are sick due to hunger. In villages, water and cows are the most essential of necessities. Even if there is no bread, a villager can at least drink the cow's milk.

I have seen many mahatmas who have enjoyed a long lifespan stretching to over one hundred years, just by drinking cow's milk. Haven't you heard the term *dudhahari* mahatmas? It means the great ones whose diet is milk only. Such mahatmas can live to the ripe old age of one hundred and twenty-five whereas you eat dal and rotis then fizzle

out and go flat at the age of fifty. People in their fifties have heart attacks. They eat dal, rotis, goat, chicken and whatnot, and then go to the doctor for injections. Their life is like a patched garment. What is the use of such a life?

My prayer

I have prayed to goddess Tulsi, “Ma, show me this much favour, that when the life leaves this body, let the name of Govinda be on my lips.” This is my prayer to Tulsi, that I should not die in a hospital with a nurse crying, disciples shedding tears, my hands tied to instruments, Swami Niranjan inserting a needle into my arms, and a saline drip. I underwent all this long ago in other incarnations. This time I’ll just sit, put my breath into *brahmarandhra* and from there – Hari Om Tat Sat. I shall leave the body with God’s name on my lips and my *dhuni*, my sadhana fire, in front of me, near the shrine of Tulsi, the temple of Raghunath, the temple of Ganesha and the temple of Christ, with bells ringing in the temples and churches and the echo of prayers coming from the mosques.

Green and prosperous Rikhia

Man’s birth, life and death should be ideal and this is possible if we keep a cow. It may not be possible to do so in the cities. That is why I am addressing the people of the villages and towns. I am telling all the villagers, those who are sitting at the back, the mothers over there, that I can give you all cows. I am a *rajarishi*, a royal rishi. But for that you must know how to look after a cow. You must put up a cowshed and teach your family members and children how to look after a cow. We are ready to give you the necessary training. We have a vet with us. I also know animal husbandry, after all, I am the son of a farmer. I have kept hundreds of cows. I can donate a cow to everyone. I am telling you this in earnest.

We will make arrangements for the local water supply as long as I am here. We will do everything for the Rikhia panchayat without depending upon the government. We

will dig ponds and build lakes, we will bore tube wells and install pumps. We can provide water within a range of ten kilometres. A sannyasin is always very capable. Haven't we also brought down the Ganga and the Yamuna? We have written the shastras, Puranas and epics, in fact, the whole Indian religion was formed by us. Is there a minister who has established a religion? No, it is only the sannyasin, the renunciate, who has founded and perpetuated religion. He lives in a hut, eats only one meal a day, wears only a loincloth, bears heat, cold and hunger. A sannyasin bears everything for his people because he considers them to be his soul.

When I came to Rikhia I had to face a hard and austere life. I have always been an affluent sannyasin; I have lived in opulence. Not even a king or an emperor could have lived as well as I did, but even in the midst of all those comforts I always wondered: Is this the ideal life? These village people are simple and innocent. Many of them do not even have a hut to live in. There is no light in their house, not even a broken bed to sleep on. They are the have-nots; they have nothing. The life of a sannyasin is dedicated to the upliftment of the world. Now just watch me work for you.

Just as I spread yoga throughout the world, I will donate cows to each and every house. Each house will have a water supply. There will be fields to till. I shall see to it that this happens. "Green Rikhia, prosperous Rikhia". This is my promise and my pledge to you.

Glory of kirtan

You have wasted your life without remembering the Lord. You cannot get peace without remembering the Lord. Devotional music has made a greater contribution than classical music. Classical music is complex and time-consuming whereas in devotional music the effect is achieved in merely five minutes. The sweetness, rhythm, rendition, variety and artistry that you see in foreign music comes from the kirtan tradition alone.

It is this kirtan that was taken abroad from India and, as a matter of fact, the biggest credit for this goes to Sri Rama,

Sri Krishna, Sri Shiva and Devi. Had these four not been there, Indian music could not have spread abroad. Even these stalwarts, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi and Pandit Jasraj, could not have propagated Indian music abroad had these four not paved the way. Today hundreds of thousands of young people sing kirtan the whole night long. When I used to visit them they would tell me that they could go on singing kirtan for one full week nonstop. I told them, “That’s good. You eat non-vegetarian food and drink hard liquor, and now that energy will be used in singing kirtan. Through kirtan you can convert whatever rajasic or tamasic food you have eaten into sattwa.”

Both formless and with form

Now for today’s story in brief. Manu and Satarupa, husband and wife, were emperor and empress. They renounced their kingdom, went to the forest and prayed to God. Siddhis came to them but were rejected. The Lord came to them and asked what boon they desired. Both said, “We want to see your form as a child.” Just as you have baby Christ, we have baby Rama. The form of baby Rama is so dear to Lord Shiva that he always meditates on the infant Lord of about six months to one year of age.

God replied, “I am formless, I can’t show you my form,” but when Manu and Satarupa incarnated in the next birth, they were born as King Dasharatha and Queen Kaushalya in Ayodhya, and Rama incarnated as their son. Even if God is formless, nameless and transcendental, which He is, at the same time you cannot confine God to formlessness. He is both formless and He has a form. There is no limitation to God. God can materialize if you can clear away the obstructions perfectly. The sum and substance is that God does incarnate and the first person who will see God will be a woman, because He is born from woman.

Satsang 6

December 5, 1996

In the shastras and the tradition, the worship of nirakara Brahman is advocated for sannyasins and yogis. When does one experience the sakara in the nirakara and the nirakara in the sakara?

There is no command for sannyasins to worship the nirakara form of God. Those who quote this from the shastras omit one paragraph and quote from another out of context. They say that even a devil can quote the scriptures. In the *Ramayana* even Ravana tells Mandodari that the whole world is a delusion. Now can that be taken as the purport of the *Ramayana*? No, you cannot quote it as the theme of the *Ramayana*. Can the utterance of a villain become the philosophy of the shastras? It cannot become the essence of the shastras. Remember this well.

Adi Shankaracharya has laid down the code of Shiva worship, Devi worship, *navagraha*, worship of the nine planets, while preaching the Vedantic school of thought. Even today the jagatgurus perform pooja of the crystal lingam. If you say God is nirakara, or formless, you confine Him within a limit. God is not formless alone, He is formless also. This is the way we should describe God. Categorical and mutually exclusive expressions about God are erroneous. You should say that God is both with form, *sakara*, and

without form, *nirakara*. You describe God as infinite, but when you define Him either as being exclusively with form or exclusively without form, you immediately make Him finite. You define Him strictly and so you limit Him. This is the basic fallacy.

In *Srimad Bhagavata* and also in the *Mahabharata* this thought is expressed thus: “God, You are formless but I have given You a form for my sake, to focus my mind. You are beyond words, beyond speech and description, but I have put You in hymns and stotrams for the purpose of worship and made You the subject of speech. You are omnipresent but I have confined You within a field, to a place, a temple and a holy pilgrimage centre. I am very weak, very limited in my worship of You, as I am bound by the mind. I fall too short to worship Your infinite formless Being. I am not omnipresent and omniscient. I am not formless. Please forgive me.”

This is a very candid confession. If you go by logic and think God to be formless, even then you must find a way to reach Him. Who will tread the path? It is the mind. Obviously it will be through the mind that you will try to reach out to Him. Everything happens through the mind and the mind is the product of *Prakriti*. It is a compound, an admixture of the three *gunas* of *Prakriti*, *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Modern, classical and western philosophy all concede that the mind is a combination of the three *gunas* of *Prakriti*. If you cut up the three *gunas* and separate them from each other, the mind will disintegrate. As the mind is made up of the three *gunas*, it has a severe limitation. It operates only within the range of *Prakriti* and cannot go beyond the boundary of matter.

Buddhi yoga

A boulder of salt went into the ocean to fathom its depth, but upon entering the water it dissolved and disappeared completely. In the same way the mind disappears at a particular point. Then who will take you further in search of God? Hence even if God is formless, to reach Him we still

need a particular state of consciousness which is beyond the mind and which can reach God. Those who have read the *Bhagavad Gita* (10:10) should recall where the Lord says:

*Teshaam satatayuktaanaan bhajataam preetipoorvakam
Dadaami buddhiyogam tam yena maamupayanti te.*

“To those, ever steadfast and serving Me with affection, I give them buddhi yoga, by which they come unto Me.”

Buddhi is higher consciousness beyond the field of sensory perception, beyond the empirical range of speech, touch, form, smell and taste. It is transcendental consciousness where there is no sense of ‘me’ or ‘you’ and even space disappears. *Buddhi* is that dimension where duality ends. The Lord says, “I give them buddhi yoga by which they can reach me.” The sadhaka can reach the sea coast, but he cannot go beyond it into the sea. Thereupon the Lord says, *Dadaami tubhyam naavam* – “I give the boat.” Thus, to reach the formless God one needs superconsciousness, which does not belong to the mind.

Therefore, when it is said that sannyasins should worship the formless God, it means in short that sannyasins should chant the mantra Om. But is Om formless? Even Om has a basis in form. To worship the formless God they then ask you to focus your concentration on the breath. But even the breath has a form. Ask the scientists, seek confirmation from science. It is also said that concentration on the heart becomes *nirakara sadhana*, worship of the formless. But the heart also has a form. So, what they mean is that sannyasins should not worship gods and goddesses. But I do not agree with this dictum and neither would anyone else.

The Christians tried to wean people away from idol worship but got glued to the cross. The cross remained intact. Is not the cross an object of worship with form? Or is it without form? Is Christ formless? Everything within the range of sense perception is with form. Whatever can be seen, uttered and touched is all with form. It is futile to talk about the formless God.

Adwaita tradition

In my Rishikesh days I started with the nirakara concept, the formless God. I was an idiot to do that. When I was twenty years old I went to the ashram of my guru, Swami Sivananda, who lived there like a muni. I had already mastered enough Sanskrit. My brain was full of the Adwaita theory. My father had put the Adwaita bug into my head and it could not be removed. So I used to debate with Swami Sivananda every day. He would impart the philosophy of *Tattwamasi*, Thou Art That, to me in his own way, and I wanted to understand it in my own way. There was such bitter argument between us that I just left him and went to learn Adwaita philosophy at Kailash Ashram, where pure Adwaita was taught.

I was born in the Adwaita tradition and I have done Adwaita sadhana. I have thought along the lines of Adwaita philosophy and all my reflections were based on Adwaitic doctrine. But today, at this age, I have gone past all the paths. I did not leave home to read more and more books or to run an ashram. I left to search for That, for God, to know what is the nature of atma, what is the relationship between atma and the world, and in what way atma is related to the jiva. Today I tell people that God is the creator of this universe, and the jiva and the world are his acts. If any special faculty is added then I may have something different to say, but today, at this point in time, it is clear to me that I started with the Vedantic concept of nirakara and travelled to this stage of sakara.

How small man is

I hesitate to say *Aham Brahmasmi* and am afraid even to hear that proclamation of “I am Brahman”. How can you call yourself Ishwara? Have you created the sun, moon, earth, oceans or sky? Have you created human life? What have you done? You have done nothing. You have not even managed your wife and children and you proclaim yourself to be God Himself. How wonderful! This does not fit in. Everyone says, “I have come out of the womb of my mother.” So my mother

is my creator and I am a part of my mother, but I am also not my mother.

Therefore, you should select a path of sadhana that suits your capacity. If you want to go to Jamunotri you will need a car or a horse. You cannot walk that distance because your body is weak. Similarly, you cannot go straight into nirakara sadhana, worship of the formless, because your mind is weak. There are numerous complexes and hang-ups in your mind. There are many desires, wishes, disappointments, fears and phobias, lying hidden in your mind. There is jealousy, craving, anger, lust and avarice; there is no end of the foibles that you have.

How small man is, how fragile, how petty. He is so weak that he is afraid of his own dreams. He is afraid if lightning crosses his path. He is afraid of thunder, of snakes, of death. He is scared to come face to face with an armed assailant. The same man who is so incapacitated, so weak that he crawls and cannot even stand on his own feet, dares to say, "I am Brahman". He has the cheek to proclaim that he is God incarnate! Such a man is not prepared to worship God with form! He is resentful towards Krishna, Rama and other gods and goddesses! Yet he ventures to focus his awareness on his own breath, psychic centres and heart centre! Such a man is a hypocrite.

Meaning of sannyasa

A sannyasin should realize for himself that his sannyasa is only a mask, only a label. Geru, shaven head, flowing beard, none of these makes him a sannyasin. A true sannyasin is a personification of *tyaga*, true renunciation and non-attachment. He is a representation of *tapas*, austerity and self-purification. If you are a real sannyasin then I bow my head to you. One who lives for himself cannot be a sannyasin. A trustee who spends the trust's money on his own children is misusing the trust. What is the meaning of sannyasa? *Nyasa* means 'trust'. You are a trustee of your own wealth, which comprises your feelings, capability, body, intellect, money and house. You must use all these resources for others.

Have you ever seen mango trees eating their own mangoes, wheat fields eating their own wheat, pumpkin creepers eating their own pumpkin? *Paropakaaaraya sataam vibhootayah* – “To serve others, to benefit others is the life of a sannyasin.” A sannyasin lives for others. A sannyasin who lives selfishly is only a member of the sannyasa institution, a member of a sect like Saraswati, Giri, Puri, Bharati. A real sannyasin is a symbol of tyaga, which does not mean leaving home or wearing geru robes. Tyaga means sacrifice for others.

A sannyasin is entitled to earn just enough to meet his necessities of life but not for enjoyments, not at all! Whatever personal wealth he has, his material, intellectual, physical and spiritual resources should all be dedicated to the well-being of others. But sannyasins have gone astray. They have opened ashrams in big cities and do not even go to the villages because nobody gives donations there. What can the poor villagers give them? They don't have even a penny; there is nothing in their house which they can offer, whereas in big cities like Delhi, Bombay, Kanpur and Bangalore, there are moneyed people who can easily write out a cheque for seventy-five thousand rupees. The people here do not even know how to count seventy-five thousand rupees!

Social obligation

The goal of sannyasa is not to find God, to seek deliverance or personal peace, but to work for the amelioration of human suffering. The world is on fire, your neighbourhood is burning and you are smugly sitting with your air-conditioning. But how long can you sit in an air-conditioned house? The day is not far off when the fire will engulf your house too. Therefore, make the world cool then you won't need an air-conditioner. When there is coolness and peace everywhere, you too will feel it; this is certain.

In a peaceful atmosphere even an agitated man cools down, whereas in an agitated atmosphere even a peaceful man loses his cool. How can you find peace at all when everywhere in the world people are crying and clamouring? Leave aside India, there are over nine hundred million

people here, but what about the millions who are below the poverty line all over the world? What are the sannyasins doing for them? What are the millionaires doing for them? The wealth which you have amassed is not yours, it belongs to society. You are depriving society of its privileges, its rights and its due tax. The government can make you pay the tax by hook or by crook, but what about the debt you owe to society? That debt is called social obligation. How will you discharge that?

Meditation on form

A sannyasin should not debate about worship of God with form or without form. Instead he should worship deities, gods and goddesses according to his religion and tradition. It is a very simple technique. I have explained it many times but you do not understand. Take a rose in your hand. Look at it then close your eyes and visualize it. Now tell me what is the difference between the real flower and your mental image of that flower? One is gross and the other is subtle. The form becomes subtle. The Rama whom you see in the stone sculpture in the temple is the gross, visible form, but the same Rama takes a different subtle form when one sees him at a supramental, transcendental level. In that dimension of perception the ordinary consciousness evolves to such a state that it becomes extinct.

One Rama is the son of Dasharatha, one Rama dwells in the hearts of all, one Rama has created the world and one Rama is beyond all of these. These are the four stages. Open your eyes and you see one Rama with the physical eyes. Close your eyes and you see his mental image. The raw material of the Rama seen by the physical eyes is stone or marble. The raw material of the Rama seen by the mental eye is mind. When one goes beyond these into the deeper dimensions, then the raw material is not even mind. In that state the 'I' ends. Swami Satyananda becomes extinct; my form, name and identity vanish.

In this stage the raw material of that Rama is neither the marble nor the mind, but it is the product of the

supramental, intuitive consciousness. That Rama is like an incarnated form. There is yet one more Rama who appears in such a state of consciousness where the mind dissolves, the senses are left behind and even the 'I' and 'you' consciousness melts away. In that dimension of awareness, where no duality is left, Rama is seen not as a statue of stone, a mental picture or an intellectual concept, but as transcendental.

Immanent and transcendental

In our Vedic philosophy God is seen in two forms, immanent as well as transcendental. So the concept of God should not be confined only to immanence or to transcendence. You start with immanence, God with form. In that form the raw material is marble or whatever, but when you close your eyes, suddenly you go into a different dimension and you see Him there inside. What is the basic material then? Not the marble, but your own self, your own mind, your own concept, your own thought.

Now your whole mind has concentrated into the form of Sri Rama. As you go on using the limited, finite properties of the mind, it becomes more and more subtle, but still the form of Rama remains. What is the basic material then? Is it marble, gold, mind? No. As the consciousness changes, 'I', ego, duality drop and there is neither you nor me. I am not aware that I am meditating. I am not aware of time, of space, or even of the process of meditation. There is no trikuti, no awareness of the meditator, of the meditation. There is no awareness of anything, but Rama remains. Somebody sees him, somebody is witnessing, somebody is experiencing. What is the basic material of that?

So it is foolish to say that it is not good to worship a form. You have to start your sadhana with a form. It need not be Rama. Rama is a name that represents the highest reality. In English it is called God, in Persian Allah. Vedantins call it Brahman, and others call it Paramatma or Rama. As there is one Rama, which Rama do I mean? I mean the Rama who is the son of Dasharatha. I mean

the Rama who is the indweller of all hearts. I mean the Rama who is the creator of the sun, moon, stars and the whole cosmos, and I also mean the Rama who transcends everything. It's a simple thing.

Take care of others first

There is no difference between a sannyasin and a householder unless you have overcome your mind, your weaknesses and limitations and purified yourself completely. You cannot change your personality by changing your sect, your *sampradaya*. You cannot change your basic traits just by changing your tradition. When you enter into a particular path, whether it be Christianity, Islam, Sikhism or sannyasa, you are still the same person as you were before. The change has to take place within your own consciousness; that is called transformation. When that transformation has taken place within you, then you will become a different person, whether you are a sannyasin or a householder. Until this happens it is all the same, whether you are a renunciate or a man of the world.

However, if you seek peace of mind and salvation for yourself, it will not come because all around you there are problems, anxieties and restlessness; everyone is unhappy. How can you be happy when the whole world is unhappy? The whole world is burning and you are seeking your own peace and salvation. Therefore, first take care of others, then take care of yourself. First take care of their moksha, then your moksha is guaranteed. First take care of their peace and prosperity, then your peace and prosperity are guaranteed. If you can't think about others, if you can't understand the problems of others, you can never realize yourself.

This is the sum and substance of all religions, the message of all saints. I know this very well because He spoke to me, to my inner soul. I heard the message very clearly: "You have to look after your neighbours as I have looked after you." Who are my neighbours? That depends upon my capacity.

*Ayam nijah paroveti gananaa laghuchetasaam
Udaaracharitaanaam tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam.*

“For those with an open heart the whole world becomes their neighbourhood.”

Parvati is my mother, Maheshwara is my father, all beings in the world are my brothers. Some are thieves, robbers and dacoits, some are sadhus and saints, but they are all my brothers. Some are collectors, commissioners, governors and inspectors and they are also my brothers. But just now Rikhia is my immediate neighbourhood. When God showers His grace upon me the whole world will become my neighbourhood. When this happens I will say, “My daughter sitting in London has a boil on her head. Send her medicine from this or that doctor.” Then there will be a thought for everybody, everywhere.

My definition of God

For God the whole world is like a neighbourhood. God has a thought for everybody. He takes care of all people. He has asked Maya, who is also Prakriti and Devi, to look after the children. The father is not home and so the mother runs the household and looks after the children. The whole show is run by Devi, that’s what I’ve heard. So, how can I accept that God is formless? I may not have seen His form. Why should I lie? But I have definitely heard His voice. I have not seen the beautiful face of God, His beautiful countenance, His hands or His feet. I have not seen His eyes, but I read that they are like the petals of the lotus flower.

However, I have heard His voice and I was listening to the same voice yesterday when Satarupa was telling Manu that He is Madhura, full of honey. I have heard His voice not once but twice. When I have heard Him, how can I take Him to be nirguna, without attributes? My definition of God will depend upon my personal experience, not on what the books say. You are quoting what has been written in the books. I am telling you what I have experienced. What

I heard was the voice of God. I have proof of this. I have the proof that He spoke to me. Now how can I take Him to be nirakara? How can I ask the sannyasins to worship the formless God?

I know there is nobody who does sadhana of the nirakara, nor is it what the shastras have written about. If you say that Swami Satyananda is saying something of his own accord, it is not so. In the *Ishavasya Upanishad* (v. 12) it is written that those who seek the sakara, the manifest, and those who strive for the nirakara, the unmanifest, go into darkness.

*Andham tamah pravishanti yeasambhootimupaasate
Tato bhooya iva te tamo ya u sambhootyaam rataah.*

The implication in this verse is that those who worship nirakara, the unmanifest, do so under duress. When they force themselves to do sadhana on the unmanifest, they experience a state of darkness. Therefore, if you wish to perform sadhana in earnest, start with sakara, the manifest, and stay with sakara. For a sannyasin, sakara is his guru and his Narayana. The mantra of a sannyasin is *Namo Narayana*, that is all.

There is a question connected with that. How can self-acceptance and effort towards perfecting oneself coexist together? How can we accept and make an effort at the same time to bring passions such as fear, anger and possessiveness under control?

What is the nature of the mind? The mind is influenced by sattwa guna, rajo guna and tamo guna because they are the constituents of the mind. I have always prayed and even today this is my prayer, “I do not want anything from You.” I never said to God, “Give me peace of mind, give me buddhi, make me strong mentally.” I had no such business relationship with God. I said to myself, “God has given me everything.” Only once have I prayed and begged and got what I asked for. Other than that, to this day I have never asked God for anything.

I never begged, “God give me peace. I am a man of desire, kill my desire. I am a man of anger, get rid of my anger.” No, I never prayed like that. I said, “God, whatever you have made me, so will I be. If you make me walk the wrong path, I shall walk the wrong path.” I never prayed to God to reform me, nor did I seek reformation from my guru. I read many books but nothing influenced me. I thought, whatever I am, I am all right.

Nobody could influence me because I know that this is the nature of my mind. Many people who try to control their mind, split their mind. Such people become schizophrenic; they have a split personality and divide their mind into two factions. Inside there is dross, outside there is a clean, tidy appearance. Because of this split personality people become sick; they have stomach pain, constipation, pain in the anus, pain in the navel, pain in the lower back. Why is there pain below the waist? Because people are suppressing the mind.

The mind is a great force in this world and you should never misbehave with it. Do not consider the mind to be a sinner. Do not fight with the mind or beat it down. Do not torture, punish or criticize it. The mind should be your friend. Take yourself to be an agent, an instrument. God is the real doer. You do not have to say this to God, but you are scared. You think that if you perform a particular action you will be guilty and have to face the consequences. Thus each one of you is set on the task of self-reformation. But when you try to turn and twist your nature, your personality becomes more problematical and more complex.

I talk to many people about this. I also discuss it with my sannyasins. I tell them to do a lot of karma yoga, to serve others selflessly. I tell them to go to the villages, serve the poor, visit door to door and partake of people’s sufferings, misery and distress. The rest will follow automatically, everything will change of its own accord. But until you share the sorrow and suffering of others, unless you consider their misery to be your own, you will never acquire control over the mind. It is not easy to conquer the mind.

Dedication to a noble cause

Don't fight with your mind. Ultimately you will be the loser; you are never going to gain or be victorious. The only way to deal with the mind is to give it a proper duty that it likes, to give it a sound job. The one thing which the mind likes to do is to serve humanity, to help the poor, to feed the hungry, to nurse the sick, to take care of the orphans, to go from door to door, find out the problems of others and render whatever help you can. You will see the transformation in the mind. The carbon becomes a diamond. It is the only way; there is no other.

You may practise raja yoga, jnana yoga and bhakti yoga as much as you like. I don't criticize them but they only pacify the mind for the time being. They are all first aid treatment. Whether you are young or old, rich or poor, capable or incapable, if you cannot think and aspire passionately to help others, you can never deal with the mind. The mind can only be dealt with by a sattwic programming of dedication and self-sacrifice. Consult the Vedic, Vaishnava, Christian, or Muslim religions; they all say the same thing. I am not telling you anything different.

Don't try to control your mind at all. Ultimately you will fail, you will fall. Dedicate your mind to a noble cause. Do not fight with the mind. You will perish, you will become sick, you will have psychological problems. So many cultures have arisen and disappeared. The only way to conquer your mind is to apply it to a noble cause, to dedicate it to the service of such an ideal that will make it happy. The mind enjoys serving needy people. Go to an institution and render some service. Visit a hospital and do a little nursing, serve the sick, help the doctors, give some first aid. You will like it. You will feel light-hearted after doing that. In the last few days you have been sweeping this place clean in the mornings. Don't you feel good after doing it?

Necessity of selfless service

Work which you do free of charge is called *nishkam seva*. Why is selfless service necessary? It is necessary for self-

transformation. It is necessary to clean the rajo and tamo guna of the mind. Nishkam seva, selfless work, is like detergent. Nishkam seva doesn't just mean work; you should have a feeling for it in your heart. You are living in India. If you visit forty odd houses you will come across scarcity, dearth, suffering, poverty, darkness and dejection. There is nothing else. As an exception you may come across a house where it is different, but for millions and millions of people the state of affairs is abysmal. They have no shelter, no food, no place to cook, no toilet, not even water to drink.

What have you done for such people? You are wasting your time if you just grapple and wrestle with your own mind twenty-four hours a day. You box with it, you give it the slip. In your combat with the mind sometimes you fall, sometimes the mind falls, but nobody can attain a decisive victory. Sometimes you win, sometimes the mind wins. The head and the tail win equally, half and half, and the wrestling ends in quits. In the evening you are fagged out. You begin to moan with a headache and take a tranquillizer or open a bottle. Some opt to go to a temple for respite. Some choose to go to a discotheque to refresh themselves. Some decide on a session of yoga nidra and play a tape.

Nobody thinks of going to the house of a poor man and lighting a lamp. Nobody thinks of visiting the have-nots. If a child is born in a poor family, at least go and give the child a crib. When a child is born in your own family you immediately think of a crib and there are elaborate preparations in anticipation. But when there is a new-born in someone else's family, all you do is give good wishes and greetings. If you only give good wishes and greetings to someone who is born today, that will not help him. Go to his house and give him a warm sweater, some tonic for the mother and some money.

This is a practical sadhana I am giving you. I do it and Swami Satsangi does it. One day she went out and Ramu, the mason, was making his way home. He called her and said, "See, I have children." His wife had given birth to twins. So Swami Satsangi came and informed me. She said, "He

is asking for a name for his twins. What names would you suggest for them?" I said to her, "Forget about naming them. First give them a crib, give medicine, get a doctor, cut the umbilical cord. Take Swami Suryabindu to treat the wound with antiseptic. A name you can give tomorrow or even in nine days. What is the urgency?"

Make friends with the mind

Now tell me, if a person can think on these lines, how can he have a mental problem? I have never fought with my mind. My mind is my friend. Sometimes the mind also commits a mistake, but I take it in my stride. I am one of those who are straight and outspoken. The mind does have its weaknesses and foibles. Who is there in this world who has entered a chimney full of soot and yet managed to remain unblemished? If there is anyone among you who can claim to be spotless, then raise your hand. No wise man would expect to come out spotless from a house full of black smoke.

Whoever has come into this world has to have three cheats sitting within himself: *kama* (desire), *krodha* (anger), and *lobha* (greed). These three flaws are the smugglers hiding in one's mind. Everybody who is born in this physical body has desire, anger and greed. Nobody can deny it, nobody is free from these three. Sometimes my mind is influenced by all three and I say, "Go ahead." I never fight with my mind. He is my chum, my friend, my comrade. He lives, thinks and works for me. But we have made an arrangement. He says, "Swamiji, you are my guru, I am your disciple."

Swami Sivananda and many other saints have told us about the house in which a one hundred watt bulb is burning. It emits a thin shaft of light through chinks in the door and windows. The bulb burning inside is compared to the mind. The mind is a small fragment of the divine self. The mental power is only a very limited frequency of the divine self, of God. The mental power is not demonical, it is only a power with a limited frequency. Therefore, don't misbehave with your mind. Make it your friend but not by

being bossy. This is the age of democracy, the mind also says it has rights.

Your mind speaks to you in a friendly relationship of equality. It does not take you as its boss. It is like your children telling you off. In this world of misery, suffering and yearning, the mind keeps pining for things. So, in this twenty-four hour carnival of a world, say what you want and let me say what I want before it is too late. Sometimes the mind triumphs over me, sometimes I win over the mind. Sometimes the mind listens to me, sometimes I listen to the mind, but now the mind is my disciple and calls me its guru.

All of you can attain such a relationship with the mind but you have already created enmity with the mind, like that between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Now it is not possible for you to have an amicable relationship with the mind. For you the mind is a sinner, the source of all misery and vice, the origin of worry and anxiety. It is the storehouse of passion, anger and all human weaknesses. The mind for you is a dirty toilet which you cannot enter. This is your definition of the mind. This is your deep-seated misconception of the mind. You have to change it because the mind is very powerful.

All the great people of the world have commanded their minds to perform wonderful feats in their respective fields, whether they were gurus, mahatmas, artists, scientists or men of letters such as Buddha, Mahavir, Gandhi, Newton or Einstein. Valmiki and Tulsidas commanded their minds to write the *Ramayana* and *Ramacharitamanas*; they didn't just sit in the forest. The mind is a minute fraction of the unfathomable Brahman. Nobody should misbehave with it.

The mind has a vulnerability, a weakness. If you think of the misery and misfortune of others, the mind melts. It sloughs off its hard crust. Suppose you have ten or twenty thousand rupees and the thought comes to your mind, let me help the poor with this money. If you actually do something to help the poor, that day your mind will be very pleased, very peaceful. You will feel so peaceful that you will not be able to express it in words.

Many years ago I went to Rajgir with a family well known to me. The gentleman had a son who was eight years old. The father went straight up to Taptakunda, the hot spring, without paying attention to the beggars who were begging at its foot. The eight year old boy pleaded with his father to give the beggars some money. The father dismissed the child's pleas, saying the beggars were all cheats pretending to be poor, but the boy went on insisting and parted with the four and eight anna coins which were all that he, as a young boy, had. The matter ended there.

When they came back to the circuit house where we were staying, the father went on appreciating the boy's kind thoughts for the whole day. He went on repeating, "Look what a kind boy he is. He is full of good thoughts. He would not let me go until he had given some alms to the beggars." Thus even the miserly father had a mind which could appreciate his son's kindness. If you want to befriend your mind, listen to me. Treat the whole world as your family and reach out to as many people as you can.

Practical points of spiritual life

When I arrived in Rikhia in September of 1989, I closed all the doors and made a sankalpa that I would do Panchagni. When I started this sadhana, Swami Satsangi, who is the *karobari*, the caretaker, was in a big dilemma. Every day she would say, "What kind of life do these people live here? I can't understand it and I can't accept it." I said, "What am I going to do?" She also did not know what to do. So a year passed and then another one. During that period of Panchagni I started an additional anushtana of one hundred and eight lakh (10,800,000) mantra repetitions. This meant three hundred days of mantra repetition at the rate of eight to ten hours a day, quite a heavy schedule. I did not meet anybody that year.

Chaturmas, the four months starting from Karka Rashi, is a very important period for me. At that time I heard the voice, very clear and sonorous, completely horripilating the whole body. It was so peaceful, so pacifying, I have heard

it once before. When Chaturmas was over I came out and met Swami Vedananda, who had some good ideas, as had Swami Satsangi. They had not heard the voice as I had, perhaps they were deaf, but after that they started to work for the villagers throughout this area. They have touched their agriculture, households and every aspect of their life. Within a short period this will become a happy and prosperous area.

Previously these people were completely forsaken non-entities whom nobody cared for. The government doesn't take care of them and they are unable to take care of themselves. They have no water for irrigation. I asked a lady who came here, "How do you sleep?" She replied, "I stitch all the torn saris together, spread them on the floor and sleep." She was a very sick and weak woman. Recently I sent her to have a gall bladder operation. These are the practical points of spiritual life.

You should not aspire only for meditation, communion or moksha. You should rethink about spiritual life, reschedule your program. The next time I call you, I may ask you to make roads. So come prepared with spades, axes and such tools. I will call you all here and ask you to make roads in the interior where there are no roads. If you do not want to work, then do not come.

How can we become like you?

It is a good question. When I was born, my family members had my astrological chart done. All the bad stars were in the forefront of that chart. The astrologer predicted, "This boy will be a loafer, a vagabond." I did become a loafer, but in Sanskrit it is called a *parivrajaka*, or wandering mendicant. He said I would be poor and so I am, even today. I have not signed a single cheque or opened a single bank account. I just changed the connotation of the word 'poor' a little. Instead of being penniless, I became a tyagi, a renunciate. He predicted, "This boy will be the destroyer of the family." I did destroy the family line by remaining unmarried. As I have no children, who will perform my last rites?

However, I met a guru who influenced the direction of my life, although the astrologer gave no clue about this. He had no inkling of this event and could not read this part of my life in my chart. guru's grace came down upon me. I became a wanderer, but with a difference. A spiritual mendicant is called a parivrajaka. I remained poor as predicted, but I have watched cheques worth thousands of millions being signed and changing hands, just as a policeman watches the morning traffic.

The family line has ended but what kind of an end is that? Here I have a number of sons and daughters. I just sit here and my sons and daughters run the show, carry out all the programs, run the kitchen, keep the accounts. Even one's own son would not do so much. When there is a wedding in the family, all the family members work diligently. Similarly all these people work here for the Ram Naam Aradhana. I entered into good company, satsang, and the whole context of the prediction changed.

Now tell me, do you still want to become like me? Do you want to become a loafer, a wanderer, a poor man? What do you mean by saying that you want to become like me? Who am I? I am not a rajarishi, I am not Vishwamitra. I have always managed myself. You have to manage yourself. Gold cannot become a diamond and a diamond cannot become gold. Iron cannot become zinc and zinc cannot become iron. Whatever you are, you are all right. Now put yourself to such a use that you become contented and happy. If I were to die today, I would have no regrets. I would die a happy man.

Live for others

I have fulfilled my karma, my destiny. I have done everything within my capacity that had to be done. There is nothing more left to do. A tin with the capacity to hold twenty kilos of ghee can only contain twenty kilos of ghee, no more. If you try to fill it up with more ghee, it will spill over. I am in the same state now. You evolve yourself according to your own personality. While evolving yourself,

however, remember this: a man's life is for others. A man who lives only for himself is not a human or even an animal. Have you ever seen a hen eating another hen? You live for yourself, earn for yourself and enjoy your earnings for yourself. This is not the sign of a human being.

Man has bound himself with the cord of selfishness. Whether or not you can do something about it is a different matter. I understand your limitations. But consider this point – when the bridge to Lanka was being built for Lord Rama's army, didn't the squirrel make a humble contribution? She would pick up a little sand and drop it on the bridge under construction. The bridge could not have been built with the sand she brought, but look at her *bhakti*, devotion and dedication to the Lord's work. That is the most important thing.

The intensity of feeling within you is all that matters. You may not be a millionaire or a billionaire, but you can still serve by some means other than money. You can serve through physical work, *bhakti*, genuine emotion, compassion. Suppose you are a poet, a story writer or an artist working with the media. You can inspire people, you can set them thinking altruistically. Suppose you are a leader, the head of a panchayat, a village council. You set the rules for the village, so tell the people that they should not live for themselves but for others.

The tree brings forth fruit for others. Have you ever seen a mango tree eating her own fruit? Grains, vegetables, flowers and fruits grow in abundance for others to eat. Look around and you will see that everything lives, thrives and grows for others. It is only man who lives selfishly for himself. He earns only for his own children and keeps clinging to them selfishly. Does a pumpkin say, "I am only for cobblers! I am only for brahmins!" Does it ever say that it won't go to a brahmin or that only a Muslim can cut it up? No! Whoever lives for others is dedicated to others. One who is selfless is selfless towards one and all. One who is charitable is charitable towards one and all. One who is a well wisher is a well wisher to all, not only to Muslims,

brahmins, shudras, kshatriyas, vaishyas or widows. He lives for one and all without exception.

Guru's grace

Another important point is that I never tried evolving, moulding or developing myself. Everything has happened of its own accord, but the main reason behind it was my guru's entry and presence in my life. Without him stepping into my life, the transformation would never have taken place because I was a very hard and heartless person. By guru's grace this stone-hearted man started melting, this iron man began to soften. It was the association with my guru that brought about this change within me.

My guru was a very special person. He would call all the sweepers and scavengers, feed and clothe them, give them tea, wash their feet, and ask me to do the same. He would also call lepers and he started a leper colony in Rishikesh behind Kailash Ashram on the banks of the Ganga. I would go to the colony to narrate *Ramayana*. There were about two hundred and fifty leprosy patients living there. My guru had huts made for them, had their roofs thatched and did everything for them. They were taught to chant Rama's name. He forbade them to beg in the streets and would even send them bundles of bidis. They were given goats to rear because lepers are forbidden to raise cows.

Feel the pain of others

There were so many incidents like this in his life, not one or two, but thousands, which I saw with my own eyes. He believed that those who think well of others have tender hearts. One who thinks ill of others cannot have a soft heart. One who thinks ill of others has a hard heart which needs to be pounded. Prakriti breaks hard core hearts. Your heart should be so soft, so tender, so sensitive, that it should immediately respond to the cries of agony and pain from others. Draupadi's agonized cries for help reached the Lord because He has a tender, soft heart. Even if we had been around, her cries would not have touched our hard

hearts. We would have escaped with the excuse that we were unaware of what was happening to her.

You should be able to feel the pain of other people, to feel the tragedy in another's life. Before you are able to experience Brahman or the Lord, to see the light or experience enlightenment, you must be able to feel the pain and agony of another person. If you can't feel or respond to another's agony mentally, it means you cannot attain peace, you cannot see the light. Such a compassionate and sensitive heart, which feels and responds to another's pain, attains knowledge effortlessly. The more distant and unaffected you are from the suffering and distress of others, the further Brahman will be from you. God, Shiva, Rama, Devi, all will be beyond your reach.

You should be tender and sensitive towards the misery of others. Your hearts should immediately respond; compassion should flow from you. Your heart should go out to all agonized people. You should experience other people's sorrow and suffering as your own. Only such tender hearts can feel and experience the paramatma. Those who are unmoved and insensitive to the feelings of others are unworthy to be called human. They are animals. They share the four instincts of food, sleep, sex and fear with the animals and their lives rotate around them. People eat and sleep; animals also eat and sleep. People procreate and so do animals; people get frightened and so do animals. What is the difference between people and animals?

People should be as sensitive as our Bhole. When Swami Niranjan is on his way here, the breeze from the north excites Bhole from fifteen miles away. He prances in joy, runs to me and conveys in his own way that Swami Niranjan is coming. This is what your sensitivity should be like. In fact animals are much more sensitive than man. Cows and horses are very sensitive animals. Bhole is so sensitive that when I leave him in the evening he feels downcast and forlorn. When I go back to him he keeps quiet and does not greet me. He asks me, "Why do you go away and leave me?" I tell him, "I go out to meet people." He says, "But you said you

wanted to live alone, in solitude, and now what is this? Why do you go out to be with others, leaving me behind? Why don't you take me along with you?" I say, "But you bark too much." Then pat comes his reply, "But you yourself bark. Don't all of you bark?" He thinks we all bark.

The best philosophy

Animals surpass us in sensitivity and feeling. We humans confine our feelings within our family bonds. There is a strong sense of discrimination and differentiation in us. We have a strong feeling that 'this is mine' and 'that is yours'. The sum and substance of spiritual life, the best teaching of Vedanta is *atmabhava*. The word *atmabhava* means complete sympathy for others like me. It means to feel the pain and distress of others as if it were your own, to feel the poverty, sickness and calamities of others as your own. This is the best philosophy of Vedanta.

Who knows whether God is with form or without form? In *Nasadiya Sukta* the rishi wonders whether or not God exists at all. If He is, then where is He? After creating the universe and the pageant of this world has He become extinct? In *Nasadiya Sukta* the rishis raise this question in six or seven lines, saying, "Why are we wasting our time in this idle pursuit of finding God? If He is, He is here and now among human beings. Look for Him where He is most needed, not in the temples where people are pouring wealth on His idol."

The temples of Shiva, Vishnu and Baidyanath are full of wealth. All the temple trusts have full coffers. That God is very rich, but the God living among the poor and the downtrodden in the guise of a lame or blind man is needy. Go and look for Him in destitution, hunger, starvation. Go to those houses where there are no hearths.

*Jale Vishnu, sthale Vishnu
Vishnu parvatamastake
Jvaalaamaalaakule Vishnu
Sarvam vishnumayam jagat*

Vishnu is in the waters,
In space, on the mountain tops,
In the garland of flames,
In every nook and corner of the world.

This is a fact, it is not a theory. Why don't you translate this into practice? Let this ideal be realized in life.

Satsang 7

December 6, 1996

The stream of Ram Naam flows on through kirtan and some bathe in that. Many people have been asking me about the identity of Rama and the purpose of this Ram Naam Aradhana. I must make it clear that this is not a celebration sponsored by an institution like the Lions Club or the Rotary Club, which conduct programs where there are songs, dances, music and entertainment. Nor is this a cultural program or a yoga seminar. This is a different type of event.

Tantric experience

My life has been a laboratory. In 1940, when I was going for an evening walk in Nainital, a beautiful place in North India, I came across a tantric lady. She was most unimpressive and much older than me, a horrible looking figure. She was sitting on a rock with her chillum and four or five people around her, like any sannyasin would do. She was very fat, like a buffalo, and very dark like *amavasya*, the last night of the dark fortnight. I was just passing by when she called, "Hey, come here." I went to her quietly. She gave me a jug and said, "Bring me milk from the market." She didn't give me any money. I went and purchased the milk then returned and gave it to her.

She was completely illiterate but she was telling the people around her something about the *nadis*, *chakras*, *lokas* and *kundalini*. She was speaking about the same stuff that I had read in Vivekananda's books, in Swami Dayananda's *Satyarth Prakash* and several other books of eminent sannyasins and scholars. I said to myself, "What is she talking about?" I thought she was an idiot, but her knowledge was so impressive. She was explaining *brahma* and *chitrini nadis*. When I went home and thought about this encounter, the first thing that struck me was what a remarkable lady she was.

I, who was born a kshatriya and had never accepted orders from anyone, had immediately done her bidding. Until that day nobody had ever said, "Satyananda, do this." If they had my response would have been, "Damn you, go away! Who are you to tell me what to do!" I had always been like a king, telling others what to do. If anyone, even my own father, gave me orders I would not respond. My father once told me to read the *Bhagavad Gita*. I said, "Damn it, I won't read it." He tried to force me, so I picked up a rifle and said, "Be quiet. I will read it if I want to, otherwise I won't, because I am the master."

However, I just followed the yogini's instructions. She called me and I went to her. She asked me to get the milk and I got it. She asked me to sit down and I sat down. She gave me a chillum and I took it. I thought, what has happened is against my very nature. Now I know how powerful she is. The next day I went to her, then I went again and again on following days and she just caught me. One day I asked her, "Will you teach me tantra?" She said, "Yes." I said, "Vama marga?" She said, "Yes." "Smashan tantra?" "Yes." "Kapal tantra?" "Yes."

I had a big property, two thousand acres of arable land and two thousand acres of forest and rivers. I took her to a cave on my property. I was a student in high school then, barely seventeen or eighteen years of age. This was more than half a century ago. I learned *vama marga*, the left hand path of tantra, from her. She taught me everything. I do not teach tantra myself. I cannot teach and I won't teach, but I

know it and I have practised it. For about six months I went to her once a week during my school holidays. During that period I had transcendental experiences and loss of body consciousness. I went away and away, beyond the dimension of human existence, where there is no sun and no moon.

*Prithvyaptejnilakhe samutthite panchaatmake yogagune
pravritte
Na tasya rogo na jaraa na mrityuh praaptasya yogaagnimayam
shareeram.*

“In that state there is neither old age nor death. I have received a body which is purified by the fire of yoga.”

One day I said to her, “I want initiation from you.” She replied, “No, I am not your guru, I have only injected the experience. This process is called *shakti sanchar*, circulation or windfall of energy, *shaktipat*. I have infused this experience, but you have to develop it for yourself by expanding your consciousness. I can’t be your guru. Go and find your inner guru.” I have been searching for that transcendental experience ever since. I went to gurus. I had a great guru. I have had a lot of adventures in spiritual life.

Japa of Ram Naam

Ultimately, in the evening of my life I found the trick. I was reading *Ramacharitamanas*, which I have been reading for years, and I read that Rama is the *shabda mantra* which Lord Shiva gives initiation into. Bhagavan Shiva has formed the shabda mantra which is one word, Rama. That Rama is not the denizen of Ayodhya, the indweller of the heart, the creator of the world or the transcendental Rama alone. He is the total combination of all the four Ramas enumerated above. I read in *Ramacharitamanas*, “Repeat Rama’s name and Lord Shiva will attend, he will come and listen.”

For the last six years I have been doing other things here in Rikhiya. This year I said, “Okay, Ram Naam Aradhana. This month of Marga Shirsha will be dedicated to chanting the name of Sri Rama, and Lord Shiva will come.” In the meantime I had myself operated upon for

cataract, not the cataract which doctors operate on, but the error in perception, *drishti dosha*. The biggest ailment in human life is faulty vision, error in perception. To remove this fault from our vision we have to undergo many sadhanas. When the error in perception is corrected then we can have realization.

The purpose of this aradhana is to rope in Lord Shiva and those who have had themselves properly operated upon can also see him. This is an aspect of my sadhana. Whatever is taking place here is part and parcel of my sadhana. This aradhana is not like the functions organized by other institutions; that is far from my objective. I do not care for, nor am I attached to, any institution. I am Alakh Niranjana. I have no connection with the institution in Munger. I get things done through them free of charge. Everything comes to me free of cost because I have nothing to offer in payment, except this loin cloth, which I am wearing out of respect for you. If need be I can discard it at once; I have no hang-ups about it.

The form of Rama, whether it be the king of Ayodhya, the indweller of all hearts, the omnipresent or transcendental reality, whatever form He takes becomes manifest to man only when his eyes are opened. The emphasis placed on the name of Rama in this festival is only that. I cannot go to Deoghar, I cannot perform pooja or abhishek, nor can I do any meritorious acts. But there is definitely one thing I can do and that is japa of Ram naam. I can chant the name of Rama and I can also hear it.

If the form of Shiva appears in front of me just once after that, I don't mind dropping this body frame. I keep asking myself, why live in an old flat? Better to get a new flat of first class quality in Bangalore or Delhi. I do not like a dilapidated, broken down house. Old age is described as a period in life where you become incapable. You cannot eat at night, you cannot talk properly because there is phlegm obstructing the vocal cords, you cannot play games like football and cricket, you cannot race with children.

Mahabharata and Madhya Pradesh

Lord Shiva loves dance and therefore I chose a dance program for the inauguration of this festival. Later there will be a narration by the famous Pandavani performing artists from Madhya Pradesh, who will enact the story of the Mahabharata. The villagers will love it because it is a good show with a high standard performance. I saw it many years ago and enjoyed it immensely. They may not remember but I do because I have travelled through the nooks and corners of Madhya Pradesh.

I have moved through all the jungles and forests. There is no place in Madhya Pradesh that I have not visited. I have wandered as a parivrajaka through the whole state and gone up to Poona in Maharashtra. I stayed with the Maharaja in Jagadapur for a while. We used to sit and chat together for hours on end. Rajnandgaon is another of the many places I have visited. It was from Rajnandgaon that I caught Swami Niranjana, entrapped his father and mother. I enchanted his whole family.

Relationship with God

Rikhiya is also a very beautiful place. This year I have decided that we will have the name of God chanted here so that it reverberates everywhere. People from all over the world will come here to sing the name of God. During that time Lord Shiva will appear either in my dream or in some actual visible form outside. He may descend even when we are eating. He does not care for privacy.

God may appear in any form or as any deity. He may be seen as Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, Lord Shiva. I have made one resolve and that is to establish a relationship with God. My relationship with God is confirmed. You are my boss and I am your slave. You tell me what I have to do. I have no choice, no priorities, no right of selection, no philosophy, no tradition. A slave has no tradition, the master's religion is the slave's religion, the master's order is supreme to a slave. A slave cannot decide anything for himself, it is the master who should decide everything.

I have been searching for some relationship with God. I found the Radha-Krishna relationship too difficult; I could not manage it. It is not possible for me to feel that I am God's wife or that He is my wife and I am His husband. Then I thought, is God my Father? No, I do not understand these father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt relationships at all because I have never lived a family life. I understand only one relationship because I lived with my guru, Swami Sivananda, and served him for many years. So this relationship is easy for me because it is my training.

I always feel that I am a servant and I will do whatever He says. I have full faith in Him because twice I have heard the voice. The voice is not the voice of my mind. It is a voice from outside which I have heard inside, and what I heard came true; that is the proof. First I heard it on 14th July 1989, in Trayambakeshwar, and the second time was when I came here at four in the morning. It was very sonorous and sweet.

Here we see truckloads of gifts being taken to the villages and being distributed in charity. We want to know whether it is social service undertaken through Sivananda Math or whether it is part of your sadhana?

I do not care for social work. My guru used to undertake a lot of philanthropic work, but I could not understand what he was up to. He used to feed lepers and clothe scavengers. I could not understand why he did it. Every person has his own personality and temperament. I have a personality and temperament which does not believe in charity. I firmly believe that everyone should fend for themselves, that everyone should live by their own means and not at the mercy of others. One who lives off charity is not fit to live as a human being.

I believe that charity is the mother of poverty. I know that charity will bring about further poverty, but what can I do? I have been commanded and I must obey. I have not gone around begging for trucks. I never beg, I never ask for things. If you want to give, you give. I have never begged,

even in the past. Asking for things is assigned to brahmins and to shudras. A kshatriya never begs or asks for things; he gives things. I have never asked for anything, neither in Rishikesh nor in Munger. Why should I ask someone to give to me when God Himself has been giving to me? It is the habit of sadhus to ask for donations, *dakshina*, but I do not do it. A man of dignity cannot beg for things.

However, gifts for the village people are coming in from all directions. The Rotary Club, the Lions Club, the devotees are all sending truckloads of things. There is one group from South America, another from Greece. Just a while ago a group went to the bazaar and emptied the shops with their buying sprees. They bought all the utensils in the shop. These shops do not stock many goods, so the shoppers buy the whole stock.

I am not doing anything for charity. The first point that should be noted is that your sadhana can never become successful as long as your neighbour is in distress. Secondly, when you do pooja you offer something to God, some sweets, laddoos and sugar candies. After that there is *katha*, storytelling, and then distribution of the prasad that was offered to God. Similarly, what we are giving is not charity. We are making an offering in God's name and then distributing it as prasad. What has been offered to the Lord is then given as prasad. When you go to a temple and offer something, what does the priest do? He gives you a sweet as prasad and you take it. *Prasad* is a Sanskrit word which means 'happiness', so he gives you a sweet, some happiness.

A man came recently and gave five thousand blankets. What can I do with five thousand blankets? Put them on myself? These Yugoslavian girls are weaving hundreds of sweaters here in Rikhia and also in Munger. Now they have also brought in machines to speed up the weaving. I have told them to weave sweaters for small children aged four to seven, who must have sweaters to protect them from the cold. Whatever prasad is given should give you happiness. So, when you take that truck into the villages and give them the prasad, you should never think that you are doing

charity or social service. That is a completely materialistic idea. It is not a good idea and does not come to me at all. It is the prasad of Lord Rama.

Our Lord Rama is a king and an emperor. Why only one truck? He can get thousands of trucks. Now, if you want to send out prasad from no less than an emperor, how can you send just a sugar candy? That would be the prasad of a miser. It would be like a minister keeping the money with him and only sending out sugar candy for distribution to people. This is not the way. Whatever is offered to the Lord in the daily pooja is loaded into the trucks and then taken to the villages for distribution to the families. The recipients are also given to understand that it is not charity but prasad. Nobody should call it a donation or charity. Last year it was the prasad of Devi Chandi. This year it is the prasad of Lord Rama.

Whatever you think or say does not matter to me. According to my faith and philosophy, whatever is given to others is given as prasad from God. This is not social service or charity; it is nothing philanthropic. There should be no ego in it. To think, I am doing social service for humanity, is nothing but ego. Who am I? It is God who does it. People give you fifty blankets, you give them to the Lord. Now these fifty blankets go to fifty people as prasad. This will give them happiness because they need it.

That is the basic philosophy upon which this Ram Naam Aradhana is based. At the end of the worship, prasad has to be given because there can be no worship without prasad. You cannot worship with empty hands. You cannot send people back empty-handed. This is the philosophy of my life. Why? Because God gave me this wisdom. Lakshmi told me, "Whatever I give to you, you give to others. If you use it for yourself I will go away, but if you give it as prasad to everybody I will leave this blank cheque with you." She warned me, "If you spend anything on yourself, if you wear a costly watch, good clothes, bathe with high quality soap, sleep on a costly bed, then I will walk out on you. You just watch and see this will happen, Satyananda. I am leaving

this blank cheque with you. After pooja distribute the prasad to everybody in accordance with their needs.” I said, “Your order is on my head.”

I say things in a light vein because my life has been like a sport. I think of life as a game. In this game there is a beautiful blend of seriousness and frivolity. Just as in your meals you have the tang of chillies, so in life there is serious business as well as fun and frolic. This is my philosophy of life and you should remember this philosophy too.

Can you tell us anything about the birth of Lord Rama from an astrological point of view?

We are talking about a very extraordinary person. According to historical research and astronomical calculation, Lord Rama was born on 4th December, 9,035 years ago. In modern times the month of Chaitra does not correspond to December, but the astronomical calculations differ by one to one and a half months after 9,135 years. According to lunar calculations, his birth falls somewhere in January. This astronomical calculation depends on the position of many stars and their movement which, of course, is a movement that we can predict.

The story about Sri Rama is very simple. An emperor, Manu, and his queen, Satarupa, renounced their kingdom and went to the forest. This was the tradition in India. After completing your duties to your family, you should leave your home and kingdom and go on a spiritual quest. They went to Nemisharanya, a place which now happens to be in Uttar Pradesh, on the banks of the Gomati. There they fasted and meditated for a very long time. While practising meditation they often heard voices saying, “Ask for whatever boon you want.” But they kept quiet and continued their practices until their bodies became emaciated, like skeletons.

Finally God, whom I call Rama and others call Allah, Jehovah or something else, spoke to them. He asked, “What do you want?” And when they heard Him their bodies became completely fresh as if they had just left their kingdom. The boon they asked for was, “Lord, we want just

one thing, a son like You.” The Lord said, “Okay, in the next age you will be born as a righteous and virtuous king, ruling Ayodhya. Satarupa will be your eldest queen and I will be born through her.”

Seek God in human form

So, Rama was born from Kaushalya 9,035 years ago, in Ayodhya. It is that Rama whom I have been talking about for the last so many days and about whom I will be speaking for the remaining days. It is that Rama whom I am asking you to think about all the time. It is much easier to think about God in a human form. There is no use talking about abstract or intellectual things, Vedantic philosophy or this or that. Try to seek God in human form. This is the greatest sadhana in man’s life. Intellectualization and contemplation bring nothing. Telling yourself, “I am Brahman” does not make you Brahman. Even if you say, “God is in my heart,” it gives no result. You must see God.

Therefore, the word darshan is used. *Darshan* means ‘inner vision’. You can have this vision in a dream, in meditation or in any state. In that state of darshan there is no awareness of you or me, only the *swarupa*, or form, of God remains. What is the form of God? It is like the form of water which takes the shape of the pitcher it is poured into. It takes the shape of a glass when it is poured into a glass. It takes the form of a bowl when it is poured into a bowl. What is the form of water, that of a cup, a glass, a bowl, a pitcher, a bucket or an ocean? Water has no form of its own. Tell me, what is the form of gold? If you shape God in the form of a stone, God takes that form. If you weave God’s picture in cloth, God takes that form. Whatever material is used, God takes on that form.

The truth or the essence is grasped more easily by people who are uneducated, illiterate and innocent. I had an experience with such a person in Rajnandgaon. I was living in a small town called Farhad, three or four miles from Rajnandgaon. I used to give diksha to people during the chaturmaas months. An illiterate man came there asking

me for diksha. I gave him the mantra *Om Namah Shivaya* and asked him to meditate on that.

He came back after a month or so and told me all the experiences he'd had. I immediately understood him. I realized that an illiterate man like him does not know how to read or write. Naturally when he was meditating on the mantra he was not thinking through the letters, so there was no interference, no hindrance from the medium of script. This script form relates with intellect and it becomes a block, an obstacle in the case of an educated man. Sri Aurobindo has written, "Intellect was the helper, intellect is the barrier, transcend intellect!" In matters relating to God there is no scope for intellectual function. For God the intellect must be kept aside. Accept God like an innocent, illiterate man, in full faith.

Do not speak about God having no form, *nirakara* or *nirguna*. If you want to listen to me then take this to be the only way: accept God as *sakara*, with form. You may think of this form as the creation of an artist or a sculptor, but when you start meditating upon this form regularly with your eyes closed, a day comes when the image that is outside you appears very vividly in front of your closed eyes, within yourself. Is this not darshan? Darshan is no different to this. When the differentiation between the outer and the inner comes to an end, that is darshan. You are watching the image of Rama outside. When you can see him exactly like that within yourself, that is God's darshan. That is what I am seeking and that is what you are hanging around here for.

This experience is a very subtle matter. It relates to the path of feelings and emotions. It is the same feeling that you have for your wife, daughter or son; the feeling that you have in a happy or unhappy state; the feeling of parental affection; the feeling of hatred, aversion, desire, attraction and passion. This same emotion comes to your aid in seeking God. You just have to change its direction, turn it about. Turn your passion, affection and hatred towards God. Whatever emotion you have, direct it towards God. The way to do this is through satsang.

Even now, whatever I am telling you at this moment is being absorbed and is affecting you. There will be some influence, some impact on you. But it is like a dog's tail. The crooked tail of a dog can never become straight, even if it is kept in a straight box for a long time. The impact of whatever you have listened to here disappears the moment you leave. A dog's tail becomes crooked again the moment it is taken out of the box. If it refuses to remain straight, the only remedy is to just cut it off. Then it will never become crooked again.

Satsang 8

December 7 & 8, 1996

People are not interested in the export of performing artists and talented people. They are only keen on exporting cars, shoes and other consumer goods. But they ought to realize that the real export material is literature, music and the arts. Good performing artists should go all over the country as well as abroad, presenting kirtans and bhajans to the people. Teach music to everyone, exchange your music with the music of other cultures. Give something and take something from them. If you adjust, they too will adjust. Life in this world is a short-lived affair of four days, so let us make the best of it with a hearty give and take.

Old age employment

I have made a program for the people of Rikhia and the surrounding areas. It is a very unusual program. All the old folk who can neither work at home nor earn wages by working outside will be called here and given a payment. There will be double wages for them. They will earn in the name of Rama and for repeating His name they will be given remuneration in the form of money. I am planning to build a hall in this enclosure where you are all sitting. Needy men and women will come here at eight o'clock in the morning and will be asked to do japa of the Lord till four o'clock in

the evening. At the end of the day they will be paid for their labour of love.

The rate of payment will be the same as the government gives to daily wage earners. The only difference is that young people get paid for hard manual work, like carrying heavy stones, working with spades, mixing cement and building materials, cutting steel, driving taxis and trekkers. These old people can't do such heavy work, so they will get paid for a different type of work. Old people are considered good for nothing. The whole day they sit at home and get abused. We will engage them here from eight a.m. to four p.m. I will work out a way to prevent any shirking, because it is a widespread habit to dodge work. Even in matters relating to God, people will try to avoid work.

At first I will have a group of about twenty to twenty-five people and afterwards I will call more. This will be a novel plan of employment. I am facing the problem now of how to give employment to the villagers. At first I had houses built, one after another, but that is not a good idea. I do not want to set up an ashram here. Whatever I have done is already more than enough, but if I could give them employment then their unemployment problem would be solved. These days people create old age homes, but that is a futile venture. I have seen it to be a failure, even abroad.

This scheme is very worthwhile. Slowly people will extend their cooperation and support it. There will be one hundred, then two hundred, then three hundred old people coming in the morning. They will be given malas and will start the japa, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare; Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare. They will go on for eight hours. In this way they will have a double advantage; they will earn wages and they will also benefit from the japa. I guarantee a rich reward from repeating the name of God.

Spiritual ecology

This is a divine idea, it comes from godly inspiration. The programs that man implements, like making roads, opening

shops, building houses, founding schools and other such things, fetch daily wages of twenty or thirty rupees for the people working on the projects, but there is no spiritual gain. On the other hand, when old people start doing japa here they will also receive a spiritual advantage. The biggest benefit will be purification of the atmosphere. Just as a house is constructed with bricks and cement, the atmosphere is created by Rama's name.

The atmosphere has two aspects: physical and spiritual. I am talking about the spiritual ecosystem. The physical ecosystem depends on the spiritual ecosystem. If the spiritual ecosystem of a place gets spoilt then the physical ecosystem cannot improve either. If the people here become too headstrong then nothing will work. However, when there is chanting of the Lord's name by hundreds of thousands of people every day, then there will be peace in all four directions.

Power of music

Those who can follow the words of the song can sing in the chorus and those who cannot follow the words can lose themselves in the *bhava*, the mood of devout surrender, which it expresses. The words of the song are:

*Lord, let me see your face in every face I see,
Lord, let me feel your grace, feel your grace in me,
Lord, let me find the place where you want me to be,
And Lord, let me find the space that brings me
Nearer to Thee.*

This song means that wherever I look, You and only You are there. Wherever I turn my eyes, I find You and You alone. Every flower has Your fragrance. It is not necessary to tell a bee to go to jaggery; wherever there is jaggery a bee will be attracted to it. Wherever a bhajan is sung, the mind will be attracted and engrossed by it. Even a cow becomes engrossed in a bhajan. When we milk a cow we play a tape of bhajans sung by Anuradha Paudwal and that Muslim singer, called Rafi, who sings,

*Vrindaavana kaa Krishna Kanhaiya
Sabaki ankhon ka taaraa
Mana hi mana kyon jale Raadhikaa
Mohana to hai sabkaa pyaaraa
Vrindaavana kaa Krishna Kanhaiyaa*

The cow listens and gives us two extra litres of milk. When we bought her for ten thousand rupees she was said to be giving ten litres of milk, but here she gives twelve litres, so we earn two thousand rupees extra. People from the surrounding areas come here to look after the cow, but when they take her to their homes they don't put on any music, so she reduces her milk yield. In England and America music is played while cows are being milked. Music is also played on poultry farms where hens lay eggs. In that way the yield of milk and eggs is increased.

All creatures – animals, demons, snakes, serpents, even sages and saints – go into a frenzy due to the power of music. Not only the living beings of this world, but even God is enthralled and crazy about music. In the villages people sing when they work in the fields. I have seen this in many states and countries. Sometimes a group of musicians sings to the accompaniment of music on the edge of the field. In this way the planting and harvesting goes on.

Negative influence of music

Music has two forms. One form has a positive influence on living beings, plants, trees, animals and harvests. Another has a negative influence. We had a servant here from Orissa who used to play a tape of film music while milking the cow. The cow suddenly reduced her milk yield and started giving much less than previously reported. When I got the report I checked on her fodder and whether she was being properly massaged or not. Everything was being done correctly. Then one day I went to the cowshed while she was being milked and found that he was playing ordinary film songs. I gave him some of my *Ramayana* tapes sung by Anup Jalota and once again her udders became full of milk!

In the Hindu religion the cow is highly respected. She is the mother, the goddess Lakshmi. Imagine yourself singing some obscene film song in the presence of your mother. Go home and try it tonight and if your mother has a strong character you will get a smack. So that was what that senseless servant was doing and early in the morning, too, when there should be no music other than the name of God. *Brahmamuhurta* is a most auspicious and holy time. It is the fourth part of the night when the yogi is awake, whereas the rascals, demons and bhogis stay awake in the other three parts of the night. So early morning is called brahmamuhurta.

We have two cows, Kamadhenu and Kapila. Kapila was bought for ten thousand rupees. She was reportedly giving ten litres of milk a day. We increased her milk yield gradually to two, three and four litres extra per day, not by feeding her more, but through music, by playing Om Namo Bhagavate and Rudra Path. When I put on Rudra Path in the early mornings, will my mother, the cow, reward me or punish me? It is a matter of common sense that she will reward me.

Nature's gifts

The point is that all creatures, not only humans but birds, animals, vegetation and trees, too, are receptive to music. Music is God-given. You try it out while working in your fields or in your vegetable patch. If you cannot sing, then put on good tape-recorded music or at least chant the name of God – Sri Rama Jaya Rama Jaya Rama. Who doesn't know how to sing, how to cry, how to laugh? Laughing, crying and singing are all nature's gifts; these are natural, instinctive faculties. Who has taught you to cry, to laugh, to sing? Thus, laughing, crying, singing, eating and sleeping are all given to us by God without training. They come naturally and spontaneously.

I am saying this to bring out the glory and the impact of music on all living beings. In life you will have to accept the power of music. Music is the easiest, quickest, cheapest,

safest and surest path to reach the goal of life. All those means which man has to reach out to God, to entertain God, to please God, to get near to God and to attain God are subordinate to the power of music. Music is the best and the foremost means of worshipping God. Pooja, flowers, arati and sweets are all subsidiary.

Try this out in the early morning and at night. Sit in a quiet place and sing to God. See how delightful it is. With the influence of spiritual music, cows will give extra milk, vegetable farms will yield extra produce, rice fields will yield extra paddy and perhaps your wife will produce more children.

Satsang 9

December 9, 1996

Today we have some guests from Jagannath Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannath, in Orissa. Their profession is singing kirtan and they also belong to a tradition which sings Nadia kirtan, a special form or variety of kirtan. This group consists of sadhakas. In Jagannath Puri, which is a holy centre of worship, Nadia kirtan is very famous. This tradition is ancient and the style is also very special. It has a sublime ethos and includes a blend of dance and singing.

You must all take part in this kirtan by opening your hearts and mouths in gay abandon. Kirtan with dance is also known as *uddand* kirtan, and the singing and dancing goes on throughout the night. It is not a one hour kirtan, which is a classical rendition of *raag* and *taal*, melody and rhythm. This kirtan has only one important element and that is the name of the Lord. It is said that in this kirtan there is neither *sur* nor *taal*, tempo nor rhythm, because it transcends them. During the day the villagers toil in their fields or do hard manual work and then at night they go on singing kirtan and bhajan of God's name. I thought that as you are all used to film music, I would introduce you to this music which the Lord likes to listen to.

Just as you have the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali on yoga, the *Dharma Sutras* on religion, the *Brahma Sutras* on Vedanta,

and the *Kama Sutras* on erotic sciences, in the same way, we have the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* on bhakti. I hope you will read it. The sum and substance of bhakti is singing God's name again and again, loudly and melodiously, repeatedly chanting the name in a community or group, not individually. Singing and chanting is done all together with the father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, friends and even servants. When a few people get together to sing God's name that is called kirtan. This philosophy was revived, not founded, by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who was from Nadia which is now in Bangladesh.

Prabhupada founded the Hare Krishna movement, which introduced Chaitanya to the world. Chaitanya would sing with such rapt devotion that anyone who was standing before him would also start singing. He moved with thousands of people following behind him, just like all the rats followed the Pied Piper when he played the flute. That was the type of scene he created. From Bengal he went to Mathura and Vrindavan, saying, "God's name, God's name, God's name, this is all one has to repeat."

In this age of *adharmā*, of tension, confusion, passion and greed, of depression, blood pressure and diabetes, there is no other way except God's name. These people represent the system of Nadia kirtan that emerged from what was Bengal and is now Bangladesh, then went to Orissa and spread throughout India. In India we have preserved this way of kirtan. There are kirtan *mandalis*, groups, everywhere, and they sing kirtan daily, weekly, monthly or on special occasions.

So, once a week or once a fortnight or once a month, the members of a family must sit together and sing simple kirtans of God's name such as Hare Rama Hare Krishna, Sri Rama Jaya Rama, *Om Namah Shivaya*. This will improve the quality of your family life. Just as the interior decor of any room improves its quality, whether it is your bedroom, drawing room, kitchen or toilet, in the same way, God's name improves the quality of the mind, the relationships and the atmosphere in your home. Never forget this.

Have you come across tigers in any of your experiences?

The place where I was born and spent my childhood is famous for its tigers. You may have heard of the book *Man Eaters of Kumaon* by Jim Corbett. That is the place where I come from. I even killed a tiger in my childhood. It was my passion. I would go hunting regularly every night but could not get him. Once I had been waiting for the tiger all night. It was pitch dark and suddenly I wanted to go to the toilet. It was a rugged rocky place and I saw a mountain stream. I went down to the stream and was searching for a place when I saw him sitting nearby.

I opened my box of cartridges. He looked up towards me and I fired! About six bullets went into him and I lost consciousness. My whole body was perspiring and as you know that region is so cold we do not know what sweat is. I was totally soaked in sweat, then the villagers came and took photos. The people of Kumaon are not cowards who run away. We are not a people who fear death. When I was born I touched the gun and the sword, not the tulsi.

The tiger skin is most important in tantric sadhana; it is not a part of Vaishnava sadhana. The elephant and the hippopotamus are very big, strong animals, but the tiger has a special aura. In the forest he roams alone, not in a group. A tiger can fast for any length of time because he does not get his prey every day. His favourite food is deer. All creatures are afraid of the tiger. When I was in Rishikesh I used to sit under a tree on a tiger skin and spread my food on it. My food used to come from the ashram as I was on duty. No monkeys dared to come near; they used to run away squeaking in fright. They say that when a tiger roars in the jungle, monkeys defecate in panic and rabbits die of heart attacks.

I don't think any of you have ever lived in a forest. It's a pleasant idea to be in a forest with all the trees, birds and animals, but when you actually live in a forest it is very difficult. Every now and then you will see a scorpion crawling, a snake passing, ants moving, birds defecating on you, or monkeys coming at you. But when you are sitting

on a tiger skin, nothing comes. Animals completely avoid a tiger skin. They have their own instinct of fear and although the tiger is dead they get the smell and feel of it. Even ants run away from underneath if you place the tiger skin on the ground.

So that is one benefit of a tiger skin. Secondly, when you sit on it, you have a different feeling altogether. You feel as if you are Shiva and then you do not need anything. Moreover, the tiger skin is useful to sleep on in the forest because it gives warmth, so you do not need anything else. A tiger skin is not just warm, it radiates heat. It is so hot that in summer you cannot sit on it.

When you sit on the scaffolding during the hunt, even if the slightest noise is made, like paper gently tearing, it is said to sound like a drum beating in the tiger's ears. One has to be so quiet. The tiger senses even the slightest whisper because its power of hearing is very acute.

Yes, the tiger is very alert and very fast. The cat is the maternal aunt of the tiger. Actually it is this aunt who has taught the tiger everything, including fighting and striking with its paws. When the training was over and the tiger was given a certificate, he attacked the cat. She just climbed up a tree and thereupon the tiger said to her, "Auntie, you taught me everything but climbing trees." She said to him, "It is reserved for my own safety." That is why gurus teach everything to their disciples yet also spare something lest they themselves should fall victims.

All the tantric kriyas are performed on a tiger skin. I have not actually witnessed it, but it is said that the tiger eats grass and, after an hour or two, vomits. Yogis who have lived in the jungles have seen this, so it is on this basis that the practice of *vyaghra kriya* evolved. The tiger eats plenty of meat, waits for a few hours, then eats some grass and throws everything out. By that time the essence of the meat has been digested and the waste matter comes out.

In India we have tigers in Bengal, Sunderban, Madhya Pradesh, Kumaon and many other places. There are lions in

the Gir forests of Gujarat. The lion is another species and its nature is also different. A lion's head is very large and its body is comparatively small and slender. The male lion is particularly beautiful but the female is not.

What is the cause of man's internal processes of thinking and feeling?

This world is full of wonders. Man's internal experiences, emotions, feelings, wishes, desires, happiness and sorrow are unfathomable. Why do you feel pain or pleasure, happiness or unhappiness? Why do you develop positive feelings on seeing flowers, birds or something beautiful? Why do you feel bad when you see bad things? It is not easy to answer these questions. Although many research scholars have done a lot of work, they have only touched the external aspect, but it really goes much deeper.

First of all, why do we think and how do we think? What is the thinking process? Is thinking an independent psychological process or is it a biologically influenced process? Why am I thinking? Is it because certain hormones are flowing in my body that I am feeling pain or depression? Is a biological and psychological process making me think or feel like that or is it something independent? Psychologists have not been able to answer that question properly.

Yoga, Samkhya, Buddhism and Jainism have gone into emotion, karma and the after-effects of karma, but that is not the final answer. I am certain, as far as my study goes, that no religion, philosophy or psychology in the world has gone that far. How do you think? What is the thinking process? Is the thinking process dependent on or independent of the brain? Can you think only till you die? After death, when the soul has gone, can the soul think without the body? Who will answer these questions? Only a person who is dead can answer.

I do not think about these things now, I've given up. I did think a lot about these questions earlier, since childhood, but now I only think about God. What is *sat*, *chit* and *anandam*, truth, consciousness and bliss? What is *satyam*,

shivam and *sundaram*, truth, auspiciousness and beauty? What is nirakara and sakara? How does God incarnate? Does He incarnate? Why does He incarnate? All the answers I found in *Ramacharitamanas*. I don't read any other books, only *Ramacharitamanas*.

I try to understand Rama and Sita from the physical and also the spiritual point of view. Who is Ravana? Is he me? If that is so then both Rama and Ravana are two forces within me: Ravana, with ten heads, ten *indriyas* or senses, and Rama. Every sense, every indriya, has a negative and a positive aspect, which makes twenty. Then Sita is also here, so Rama and Sita are in me. That means there are two forces within me that are continuously interacting with each other. This is one point of view. I always think about these transcendental questions. I don't want to waste my time in finding the answer to questions like, how do I think? Who cares about it!

You have told us that the Lord has taken an incarnation. How can we prepare ourselves for this event?

Become a good doctor, earn money and let your children enjoy some part of that. In between, come here or go to another ashram. Keep company with great souls. Be kind to good people. Exploit a little those who exploit others. Fulfil your karma to the best of your ability. Incarnations do take place, avatars are born, but the real objective of the avatar is realized only when his divinity reaches maturity in his body. When Lord Krishna incarnated he did nothing in particular during his childhood, but when he loved Radha and the gopis his divinity reached maturity. It was only then that the mission of his incarnation was set in motion. God is hungry for love. He hungers for love because only when you give him love does he mature.

The Radha-Krishna episode was the culmination of Sri Krishna's incarnated life. It was only then that a flowering took place. After the fulfilment of love one chapter ends and the mission begins. Sri Krishna went to Mathura and began his work. Lord Rama acted in a similar manner. Love

matures an individual. If you look at this from a worldly point of view, maturity takes place after interacting with love. A child who receives ample love matures better. A child who receives more hatred remains immature and makes many mistakes. Thus when you love the Lord, he too matures, that is all.

However, even when the Lord incarnates nobody knows it at the time. Though Sri Krishna was certainly an avatar, Yashoda was always scared and anxious for his welfare. When Kansa sent for Sri Krishna, she was frightened, Akrur was frightened, everybody was frightened in spite of knowing that he was an avatar. Thus man perceives things in accordance with his own limitations.

Discussion about Iran and India

In 1968, about twenty-eight years ago, I was the royal guest of the Shah of Iran in Tehran. I spoke on television for three hours. I had been speaking for only fifteen minutes when the telephone began to ring. I had to answer questions, first on yoga, then on Islam, then finally on Sufism. The television company gave me two full first class tickets: Tehran–New York–Tehran. At that time there was great freedom in Tehran, at least for women. There was no chador or burkha; ladies wore European dress even in the street. Now it has changed.

Many countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia or Pakistan are afraid that western culture will alter, change and even destroy Islam because western culture means freedom, liberty. In India also some people say the same thing, but not all. Generally the Indian people are not frightened of western culture because we always believe that every culture has something good in it, that no culture is totally bad. Islamic culture has good points, modern or western culture also has positive aspects, so in India the opposition is not that strong.

There is a very popular raag in India called Bhairavi raag. The music in Persia is played mostly in that raag. I heard a lot of Iranian music when I visited Iran long ago. I

celebrated the first Guru Poornima outside India in Baghdad, which was a very liberal city at that time. There were bars and pubs on the road. The Iraqis had a lot of money then, but now they seem to be very poor. Why is Iraq poor when it has so much revenue from oil? War destroys. The tragedy is that when I fight with you, either you lose the war or I lose the war, but the man who gives the stick to fight the war gains.

There is a lot of similarity between Indian and Iranian people, even in the facial features. At first I thought you were Kashmiri, not from your language but from your eyes and face. I was about to speak to you in Hindi. Iranians can learn Hindi in one week if they like because twenty percent of Persian words are Hindi words. In Uttar Pradesh, especially Lucknow and Punjab, the Hindi spoken by some people has sixty percent Persian words.

The land of Hindustan, from the Himalayas to Kanya Kumari and from Pakistan to Bangladesh, is very precious. I am talking about the geographical region, the topography: the land, the soil, the jungles and the rivers. Nowhere else will you find such harmony, neither in China nor in Japan. In those countries there are long stretches of water, sand or forest, but in India there is a balance. We have six seasons; they have three and in some places only one or two seasons. It is very cold here now, but later on it will be very hot.

The land of India is very precious, very valuable, but for some reason the people of India have been rendered poor. The basic difference now is that Indian people don't want to fight. Because of their experiences they think fighting is destructive. In India, especially in the villages, people don't waste things. If I throw out a torn carpet, it will be gone in fifteen minutes. It will not be left lying on the road but will be cut up and used. Many people send us clothes from different parts of India. Some of the clothes are in bad condition. I don't give them away but pack them up in a gunny bag. The ladies take them and cut them up to make blouses and skirts, and many things to sell in the market. They don't waste anything.

The basis of affluence is wastage. When you have lots of money you don't feel the wastage, though it is definitely there. But when you don't have much money, then you are very careful and any country or any people who are very careful about the things they use will survive. In Indian villages people have wells for water. They do not depend on the government, but dig their own wells and draw water everywhere. In this village there must be more than two hundred wells, no more than thirty or forty feet deep, which the villagers depend on for their water supply.

Most of the Iranians living in India are Zoroastrians. These people came from Iran many years ago when it was known as Persia, so they are known as Parsis. Now Persia has become Iran and so the people have become Iranians. The Parsis are a big community in India. They are affluent and well educated, very much like Europeans. They live like westerners and speak German and French. There are about seven hundred thousand Parsis in India and they are considered to be an important community. The Tata Steel Industry in Jamshedpur was founded by a Parsi, Jamshedji Nausherwanji Tata, about a hundred years ago.

The Parsis came to India more than a thousand years ago. At that time in Persia there was a Jihad, slaughtering and killing, so they left the country in ships and came to the coast of Gujarat. They sent a letter to the king of Gujarat asking for asylum and in reply he sent them a glass full of milk. The glass of milk was brought to the Parsi chief. He put a little sugar in the milk and returned it, which meant, "You are milk and we are sugar. We will not disturb you; we will make you sweeter." He was an intelligent man.

They were given a place called Nausari in Gujarat, where they built the first fire temple in India. They are worshippers of Agni, the fire deity. Parsis are a very industrious people and were in the forefront in the fight against the British for freedom. They have never created problems in the country, like other communities who have settled here from outside. When we talk to them we are not aware that they are Parsis because we share the same traditions.

The teachings of Buddha were taken from India to Iran and Iraq. The son and daughter of Emperor Ashoka the Great took Buddhism to Iran. The daughter was Sanghamitra and the son was Mahendra. Buddhism flourished there and many people became Buddhists. They were known as *Buddhparastha*, which means followers of Buddha. The Persian word 'budh' does not mean idol, it means buddha. Languages evolve in this manner.

Their system of marriage is just like the Muslims. Sometimes they marry into the same family. For example, they can marry their mother's brother's daughter, but Hindus don't do this because it causes genetic disaster. If you marry your maternal uncle or cousins, the family line gets destroyed and genetic flaws occur.

The Hindu system of marriage is very scientific, although it seems very orthodox, puritanical and strange. Scientifically it is the best system because when you talk about genetic integration you should always think about the generations ahead, not only about your own child. You have to think of the many future generations and whether this genetic integration will survive for seven generations or not.

Why do we want our lineage to continue down through the years?

This is not what we want; it is the *samskara* that God has put in us. There is a story told in the Upanishads. Once God felt very lonely. He had no companion, no friend, so He said to Himself, "I am alone, let me be many. Let me procreate." When God Himself wishes this, the *jiva*, the individual soul, too shares this wish. There is another important point: human evolution is a great event. There are many universes, endless creations. In our solar system there are many satellites and planets, although this may be the only planet in which life is evolving.

Where there is evolution of life there is evolution of mind, and evolution of soul also follows in the trail. Just as a baby is born, becomes a young child and grows up, life

too undergoes evolution. First life started then the mind was born, then inside the mind the soul was born. However, this is not happening on the moon, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Venus, Neptune, Pluto or anywhere else. This signifies that each person should preserve his line well. If life comes to an end on planet Earth, then God will have to struggle and take pains to create another evolving form of life. Life is so important; it is the outcome of natural evolution over millions and billions and trillions of years.

Therefore, it is very important that we marry in such a way that the progeny continues without any genetic disaster. There are many tribes and languages that have become extinct. We do not know anything about them. Whatever man has created should be preserved. We must observe all the rules related to this process, and *dharma*, or religion, must teach us that. It is the responsibility of a religion to work for the survival of life, language and mankind in general. No tribe should be destroyed yet people went to South America and suppressed the indigenous Indian people and others went to Australia and suppressed the Aborigines.

Life in itself is sacred. No life is unimportant, whether it is the life of a black man, a white man, a brown man or a yellow man. Even if he is a fool, an idiot or a criminal, you have no right to kill him. Man should not kill man. This is precisely what the Buddha, the Maharishis, the Vedas, and even the Bible have said.

What do you mean when you say you have a sankalpa to give away prasad?

What is meant by offering something to God? You must go to the temple and dedicate it to the Lord. It is a *sankalpa*, a resolve. For example, I thought, I love you very much so I will give you something. The feeling of love that arises in the mind becomes the sankalpa. When you feel love, devotion and affection for someone, then whatever you think about that person becomes your pooja, your worship, your sankalpa.

Please help me, as I cannot overcome the pull of maya and moha in my life.

Delusion, ignorance and attachment, the *maya* and *moha* that you talk about, are the defilement of Prakriti. Yet this is essential for the evolution of mankind. Food is essential for the body and so is the elimination of wastes. The body needs rest and relaxation as much as it needs toil and work. Death is as necessary as birth. Had there been no death what would have been the predicament? If you go on eating but do not eliminate the waste matter, what will happen? Similarly, maya and moha are the modes of Prakriti and they have to come out. If they are not expressed then your evolution from one lifetime to another cannot progress.

Remember also, that it is not wrong to feel attraction towards someone. The attraction existing between individuals is right and natural. The attachment which parents have for their children and children for their parents, the attraction between men and women, the attraction for money, all these are essential. If this attraction had been absent, what would have been the outcome? If no attraction existed between people, life would be arid and dry. There would be no interest in life. Imagine a woman standing at one end and a man at another, showing no interest! Is such a life worthwhile? At least appreciate the beauty of the woman, of her hair, her elegance, her style. At least appreciate the virility of the man. There should be some feeling, some emotion in you.

A man without emotion is like a stone and, therefore, a man without moha, without attachment, is like a stone. Here you must remember one more point. There must be a limit to the attachment, a code that society determines from time to time. These codes are called rules. In olden times one could urinate on the road and there would be nothing wrong with that, but today we would be punished for doing so. In those days that was the norm, but these days the norm is different. In those days women did not speak to men, not even to their own father-in-law. There used to be an iron curtain, but now women talk to men freely and

openly. In those days that was the rule; these days this is the rule.

Therefore, these rules and relationships of maya in the world change according to the place, time and circumstance, so they are neither accepted nor rejected by religion. Now a woman sets her heart on a man. If he is already married, she has to control herself. You are a brahmin, she is a cobbler by caste, but you want to marry her. Okay, the new thinking is, she is human, I am human, but society does not accept it. There is consideration given to the age factor, the caste factor, the background factor. This is the rule, the discipline for restraining moha. This is the moderation of moha. The attraction and attachment of moha have their place, but it is essential to have discretion, to follow the codes of conduct and to keep moha within bounds.

A person is not stopped from relieving himself but he cannot do it in the kitchen. Nobody stops you from defecating, but if you do it anywhere you please then it is the behaviour of an animal. A human being is given a code of conduct. You can go to the toilet in a place where it will not disturb the hygiene or sanitation. So moha, attraction and attachment, are not bad. I do not consider them to be taboo, I say this openly, but you must use discretion and follow the rules imposed by place and time. What does the present situation require? What are modern man's wants and desires?

In the past widows lived with the family and did not remarry, but today in modern families there is only the husband and wife and no room for a widowed sister-in-law. How can he fend for her? Either you get her remarried or educate her and get her a job. Now you will have to give up the old idea. Therefore, I say that *kama*, *krodha*, *moha* and *lobha*, desire, anger, attachment and greed, all have their place in life. They are products of Prakriti and they must be expressed and brought out, but one must follow certain codes and rules.

Satsang 10

December 10, 1996

The Yoga University is underway in Munger. Students and teachers will be trained simultaneously, and through them we will bring yoga into other universities. From there yoga will spread all around the globe. In modern times this will be the best way to propagate yoga, especially when you want to train people in yoga on a mass scale. Just as the art of dance and music is taught in colleges and universities, yoga, too, will be taught as a faculty. This work has been assigned to Swami Niranjan and I have come away to be in solitude. I don't deal with yoga or anything else at all. I just stay here, no management, no responsibility, no institution, just myself. After the age of sixty a person should live in solitude. This is necessary as it is only then that he or she can enjoy life. Prior to that there is no enjoyment, only toil and hard work like a bull.

Why is Deoghar such a special place?

Deoghar is considered to be superior even to Ranchi from the climatic point of view. The temple of Baidyanath Dham is the ishta devata of Bihar. Here Shiva is the ishta devata of the whole state. In the month of July and August millions of people, rich and poor, politicians and officers, old and young, men and women, come here on foot. They

trek a distance of about sixty miles, ninety to one hundred kilometres, from a place near Munger called Sultanganj. They carry Ganga water on their shoulders in pots or gourds and walk the whole distance.

The pilgrims observe strict rules throughout the journey and they never rest the water pots on the ground. The government makes arrangements so that the water pots can be kept hanging. During the month of Shravan, which is between July and August, the government does not function here. The entire machinery, police, army and civil servants of the municipality are all used to control the temple grounds. The number of pilgrims can reach two to three million, which is why there are so many hotels in Deoghar.

The people here are very good. When I first came to Rikhia, this area was desolate. There was nothing growing, not even a tree, shrub or bush; it was all stones. Electricity and the telephone were installed only after I came here and then two transformers were installed to regulate the supply. Now they have installed two dish antennas and I have a wireless telephone system. That solar panel is a wireless telephone system; it doesn't need wires.

There are several big institutions here in Deoghar: Ramakrishna Mission, Hindi Vidhya Peeth, Balanand Brahmachari, and they are very good institutions. Baidyanath Dham is the only ancient temple to which non-Hindus can go. If you go to Jagannath Mandir at Puri you will find that foreigners are not allowed to pay their respects to the deity there. But here anyone, Hindu or Muslim, can go to Baidyanath. This temple does not concern itself with religion.

In China there are more women than men. In western countries also we find the same trend, more girls, fewer boys. How will this affect the future?

More girls means more swamis because girls are spiritual and religious. They say that women have more discrimination than men. That programming called discrimination

is more active in women's brains, so they are better able to discriminate. By and large women anywhere in the world are spiritually minded. They are always associated with churches, ashrams and charitable societies like Red Cross and other relief organizations. In satsang meetings, *Ramayana* katha or kirtan, you will find seventy percent women and thirty percent men. Women have a spiritual nature. They have more faith than men, a greater inclination towards religion and they are honest. If women were not honest they would not be housewives, because men would not leave the key with them.

I think women are honest by nature. If you behave well with them then they are totally trustworthy, but if you behave like a demon then they may betray you. Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, had very great respect for her husband, but she also had great respect for Rama and she did not accept Ravana's kidnapping of Sita. Ravana had brought many women into the harem and she did not mind, but when he kidnapped Sita and brought her back to Lanka, Mandodari said, "This is not right." Even then, right until the last day of the battle, she never betrayed Ravana.

When Ravana was killed, she said, "How many times did I tell you not to do this, but you would not listen to me. You had so many wives but I never objected. Only in Sita's case did I object because kidnapping her was wrong. Sita is not an ordinary woman, she is divinity personified." All the other women of the harem wanted to go to Ravana because they thought he was a powerful man and they would have a nice time with him, but Sita was not like that because she was divinity personified. So every woman has that trait, whether she is your daughter, wife, sister or even disciple.

In India, women are scared of their husbands taking sannyasa and they do not consider the age factor. Therefore, sometimes, even if we want to give sannyasa to a man, we don't because the wife may become displeased. In olden times a husband and wife would take sannyasa together. They would leave their families and live in solitude in the forest near a village, build their own huts and live simply,

reading the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Ramayana* and writing. They did not keep their sons and daughters with them, instead they had their disciples.

The guru lived in a hut and a small group of followers lived nearby in different huts. There was a communal kitchen and they all led a joyous life together. There were no blood pressure, diabetes or kidney problems. The disciples used to serve the guru well. Children cannot serve their parents for long because they soon develop their own interests and engagements.

Is memory enhanced through education or does it work the other way around, as in the case of the Pandavani?

Education and memory are in no way connected to each other. Memory is independent of education. You can have a very good education and a bad memory. In the same way education and wisdom are also not connected. You can be a very wise person but uneducated. You can be a very highly educated person without wisdom or common sense. These are some of the innate qualities in man which have nothing to do with education, art or culture.

Education doesn't affect the quality of life very much. Previously, for many thousands of years most people were not educated, but still food, garments, ornaments, arts, crafts, dance, music and many other things were produced all over the world. Most people were uneducated, except for the children of kings and emperors. In Europe a few centuries ago there was no education, but they still established empires, fortresses, weapons and literature.

Pandavani folk artists have very good memories. They remember everything in detail. They depict how the person was standing, behaving, crying, shouting or fighting. This is how history is preserved, by folklore, folk art, folk music, folk dramas and folk stories. Otherwise a civilization develops and then some crazy power comes in and destroys it. There is a war and the victor suppresses that culture, so the religion, society, philosophy and systems which were developed over thousands of years are not allowed to remain.

This has happened to every culture in the course of history. Before Christianity came to Europe there were many spiritual traditions already existing there. Westerners were not barbarians before the advent of Christianity; they had kings, queens and empires, but these cultures were all suppressed during the Crusades. However, the folklore continued. The same happened in India. Scythians, Parthians, Huns, Mongolians and Turks all invaded and suppressed the culture, but people like these Pandavanis kept singing the old, unwritten stories, and that is how we know the history.

These folk artists are a very important link in history. From the way they sing, write and draw you can still understand what the history of mankind was like in the past, and nobody can destroy that. When the Muslims came into India from the northwest, from the Hindukush mountain-side down into Afghanistan, millions of people left this subcontinent. In fact, the name *Hindukush* means 'massacre of Hindus'. *Kush* means 'death'. Just like *khudkushi* means 'to kill one's self', Hindukush means killing of Hindus.

Millions of Hindus were massacred and those who emigrated are known as gypsies in the West. Gypsies are refugee Hindus and wherever they go they carry music. They don't stay in any one place, except in Central Asia where they now have settlements; otherwise they keep moving throughout Europe. They are a very large community and their language is very close to Sanskrit and Hindi. The gypsies left India at the time of the terrible wave of invasion from the northwest, from Mongolia, led by Genghis Khan.

Genghis Khan came into India and then went west to the Caspian Sea and the Baltic, killing everyone. The western side was a Christian area so the Pope wrote a personal letter to Genghis Khan asking him to stop the massacre. You can see that letter now in the Vatican. He sent the letter to Mongolia with two priests, but by the time they arrived Genghis Khan was already dead. His successor arrested both of the priests upon their arrival. These priests

have written in their memoirs of their journey from Rome to Mongolia. On their way through the Caspian/Baltic area they passed through many villages which were completely destroyed.

Such disasters have taken place where hundreds and thousands of people have been eliminated. So folk artists, like these Pandavanis, who sing, preserve the art forms. They write stories, which provide very important links in history and they also give a good performance. We believe that grace is important and this Pandavani performer has grace in her dress, ornaments, expression, poetry and music. In the villages at night they sit underneath the neem tree, make a fire and then sing all kinds of stories.

Is it due to lack of discrimination that we make so many mistakes in life?

Yes, it is evident that when you lack discrimination you certainly make mistakes. Bad karma and mistakes are the same thing.

Can you tell us more about the marriage trousseaus that are given to the brides?

All the girls who go to their husband's homes after marriage come and see me. It has become a complicated routine. When a girl is married she first visits her husband's home, then returns and stays in her home for some days. Then before she finally goes to stay with her husband, she comes here to receive her good luck kit. I keep very nice things for them; I've already started collecting. A gold ornament is a must and I give some jewellery as well as high quality cosmetics and shampoo.

In India there are sixteen categories of items for beautification; we call these *solah sringar*. There are ornaments and items to beautify the eyes, nose, cheeks, skin, lips, hair, nails and dress. In all there are sixteen and I add one more item, sanitary towels, which is the seventeenth. Perhaps the ancient rishis and munis did not think of that. The villagers understand this very well. Sometimes they

say, “Swamiji, are you giving sixteen items?” I say, “No, seventeen,” but they still ask for sixteen although they know the seventeenth. I collect sanitary towels and tampons. Bundles and bundles are kept in the store because it is as important as lipstick, or maybe more so.

How does one know the difference between God’s voice and one’s own desire?

There is no discriminating principle or formula. I know only one thing, my mind does not speak to me. No, never in my life, I’ve always ignored it. I have a very different nature, not only after sannyasa, but by birth. I don’t like anyone’s suggestions. Even if it is a good, right and proper suggestion, my first reaction is no. This is my nature. If it is lunch time and you say, “Swamiji, it is time to take food,” I will say, “Wait.” I won’t say, “Yes, it is time to eat,” I’ll say, “Sit down now, eat later.” Then after fifteen minutes I will say, “You may go for lunch.”

I have found that a man whose destiny it is to command has to have this type of behaviour. Significant or insignificant suggestions from others should not be followed. If a suggestion is right, after some time I say, “Okay, go ahead.” In the same way, I have never listened to my mind; I have never heard it. I can think very clearly and whenever I think of things, I don’t think in the form of words. I see the whole thought process just as you see the whole scene taking place on television. I visualize thoughts, I don’t think thoughts.

When I knew the Ram Naam Aradhana was to take place, I visualized the whole area, how it had to be set up, how the canopy should be prepared, where the stage would be. I even visualized the colours. That is my God-given faculty and it was a stronger faculty in my early life. My faculty of visualization was so strong that if I opened a book and saw a page and then closed the book, I could remember the whole page as if I was reading it. Even now I can do it. I don’t read newspapers, books or letters. I just open a letter, close it and I can tell you what is in it.

I had a very strong faculty of visualization and I lost it, because when I was in Gangotri practising pranayama I smoked a lot of ganja. This damaged that high frequency capacity in me. That is why I object if I know somebody is smoking ganja, because I know he is destroying the mental capacity of his brain, as I have experienced it. But I did not lose this capacity totally. I still have a very good photographic memory even now. I can read the whole of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Ramayana* and the Vedas from beginning to end and recite them verbatim, completely.

Therefore, I never hear or care for my mind speaking. Why should my mind speak when I can see it? But God's voice is different. If you are ill, you become well immediately after hearing that voice. I would like to talk to Him every day but I don't know His phone number, so naturally I can't talk to Him. But He has spoken to me and I don't think that it was only my own psychic voice. God's voice is like a healing process. Of course, what I heard must have come through the filter of my mind; it may not have been direct. Even as I am talking to you, the atmosphere between us is filtering my speech and it is also being filtered by your capacity for understanding. It goes through the circuits.

Can you talk about what you think of men because you tend to talk only about women?

I talk about women because I know them better than men. The moment I was born, a woman was my first contact and she is everyone's first contact. Did you come out of your father's womb? The man was introduced to me much later. My mother told me, "He is your father." I had no other way of establishing who he was. I couldn't even question her because she was the eyewitness. Moreover, I don't know much about men because even in my monastic life I have had much more to do with women than men, and everyone knows it. My secretary was always a female wherever I went, India, America, Germany or Japan, so I know them better.

Therefore, whatever I say about women is from firsthand experience. If you ask me to talk about men I can also give

you my experience, but it will be second-hand. Men are very dependent on women; without women they are very unhappy. If somebody gives you a cake without sugar, you say, "Okay, keep it in the fridge. Tomorrow I shall see." If someone brings you halwa without sugar, what will you say? "Keep it aside in the fridge. I will see what to do with it later." The earth without clouds and man without woman are both alike – dry, arid, uninteresting and sapless.

What is the secret of sadhana in the company of women or a wife? How can I live a life of sadhana in the company of women?

Living with a woman is a sadhana. You may laugh at this, but I am not joking. The recognized tradition of a man and woman living together is called marriage. It is a social sanction so that everyone may see that you live with her and she lives with you, and then they are able to say that it is all okay. This relationship is actually intended for the maturity of the spiritual self. Any and every relationship between a man and a woman is a step ahead in spiritual life, and you cannot exclude the sexual relationship. You have come from a Christian background, so the idea of sin is always lurking. Unless you are able to control that idea of sin, you cannot understand the relationship between a man and a woman.

In India we have always been taught right from childhood that a man and woman living together is a dharma, a spiritual function. Dharma means spiritual act, so marriage is a spiritual act whereby the parents and society allow a man and woman to live together. When you live together you don't just earn money or harvest the crops. She doesn't just cook the food, heat the water and look after the animals. She also sleeps with you and loves you. She gives you the best part of her time, the night. The day is not the best time because in the day she has her worries and you have yours. She has household duties to attend to and he has to earn money in the factory or serve in the medical shop.

So the important time for the sadhana which is practised together by a man and woman is at night. If you want to know about it you have to study tantra. There are many books on the subject but teachers will not teach you. Unless society has respect for the relationship between man and woman, it is not possible to teach tantra. Those who call this dharma a sin cannot learn tantra. Tantra is for people who have respect for the sexual relationship, love, amour. It is only to them that tantra has to be taught. For those with a negative outlook on sexual life it is hopeless. Only religion can be taught to them, so that they can go to church and say, "Amen", or to a temple and say, "Jaya Jagadisha Hare". Wonderful!

However, those people who are sincere about evolving their spiritual life through the marital relationship must first get rid of this idea of sin. God has created two principles: Shiva and Shakti, ida and pingala, prana and atma, heat and cold. They are represented by man and woman. The sexual act is not a bad act. Of course, it has to have some sort of *maryada*, dignity and discipline, because you also have to run a society. Besides reaching God and awakening the spiritual force, you have to live in a society. So there has to be dignity and discipline. For the sake of dignity, however, you should not decry the spiritual meaning and importance of the relationship between a man and woman.

Therefore, when you live with your wife you embrace a life of sadhana. Whatever happens between you is a spiritual sadhana. Even if she beats you it is a spiritual sadhana. Once Kali got angry with Shiva. She threw him down, put her foot on him and said, "Keep quiet, boy." Shiva and Shakti are the two principles represented by you and your wife, you and your woman. Cooking, looking after a home, working in a factory, farm or field are all part of sadhana. It is not maya, it is not adharma, it is not worldliness. But you have to know this; you have to be aware that you live in God, like a fish lives in water. Above is water, below is water, to the right is water, to the left is water, and a fish exists in water. No water, no fish.

So, if you have any feelings of guilt regarding your relationship, your marital status, your fights with your husband or boyfriend, just forget them. It's all right. I am an outspoken man. What is the use of condemning marriage when you are going to walk into it anyway? You can and should condemn and criticize that which you can do without. Marriage is indispensable. Nobody can live without marriage. In such a state, if you call marriage names and find fault with it, it will breed a guilt complex in you. If millions and billions of people could live in this world without marriage, you could criticize or condemn it. Then it would be worthwhile and people would give up marriage and become sages. It would be fun.

However, you should not look down on something which is created by God for man, which is the gift of nature to man, which is created by both God and nature. You must accept it and also improve on it. This has been my philosophy and I have always upheld it. Most men, especially monks, sadhus, mahatmas, fathers, priests, maulvis, maullanas, imams, don't talk about women. Only this man talks about women. Either they are wrong or I am, and I am certainly not wrong.

Satsang 11

December 11, 1996, Midday

When the time comes for the younger generation to take over the reins, the older generation should withdraw. Otherwise their constant interference and fault finding will weaken the youngsters and destroy their confidence. This is what I think and I also have some experience to support this thought. Young people carry out all the work here; I never do the work myself. Elders should retire after a certain age to become *vanaprasthis*. This problem does not arise in the West, because right from childhood children live away from their parents. But in our country, even if the son is grown up and earning or running his own business, the father sits in command, ordering the son not to do this or that. This damages the son's self-confidence.

At our age it is better to leave the children alone and stay away from them. It is good for them. This is my way of thinking. You have been a son in the past. Life means struggle and hardship. In the absence of hardship there is no development or progress, and wherever there is struggle there is progress and development. This applies not only to an individual but also to a society and to a nation. Today, here in India, every man is struggling hard so he can rise and come up in the world. Western man, however, is relaxing and taking it easy, so it is the time of his decline and

regression. In the West the problem is that he has to work by himself, single-handed.

Please keep this diary as my son sent it.

I collect dairies like this and distribute them to boys and girls who go to school, otherwise they have to buy notebooks from the store. The cost is twelve rupees each and they find that difficult to afford. Therefore, we bought cheap paper from Patna and had it ruled and bound into cheap notebooks, which cost only two rupees each. Then I had twenty thousand notebooks made by Swami Niranjan which we have now distributed to the children. Their exams are drawing near. Soon they will start their next term and then we will give them five notebooks each.

I don't think about the boys as much as the girls and, therefore, I give things to the girls first, like compasses and so on. Today the girls are happy and the village boys do not complain about Swamiji only giving things to the girls. The village children are very good. The people and the society here are different from urban areas. Even the elders are happy when we distribute something among their daughters and wives.

A change has taken place here in all the villages. I don't tell them not to drink or eat meat because I am not a reformer. If you want to eat meat, eat it. Yet the widow remarriage system has now started in this small place. I tell them, "You all sit and put your heads together in the panchayat and decide. Those who do not want to remarry should not be forced to do so, but those who need to or wish to remarry should be remarried."

Ramacharitamanas – melder of sects

I have heard that many of you, especially those who have come from other countries, cannot understand the *Ramacharitamanas*, but you must know that it is not necessary to understand the meaning. I have seen many of you start crying while listening to the reading and singing. Those who have read *Ramacharitamanas* will tell you that

tears start rolling down the cheeks or one feels very hot just from reading it. You do not have to understand the meaning.

The language in which the *Ramacharitamanas* is written is not the urban language of sophisticated people, it is a rural dialect. The people of Jhansi, Gwalior and Chatarpur do not have to be told the meaning because that is their spoken language. The *Ramayana* is almost entirely in the Bundelkhandi language, which is the language they speak even today. The man who wrote it was also a very good Sanskrit scholar. You may call it simple, but its expression is so apt that it could not be expressed any better, even in Sanskrit.

The *Ramacharitamanas* composed by Tulsidas has created a bond of love between the devotees of Lord Shiva and Sri Rama. Before it was written there was bitter enmity between the two, like that between Hindus and Muslims today. Devotees of Shiva were not allowed to enter the temple of Tirupati and no Vishnu pooja could be performed in a Shiva temple. In *Ramacharitamanas*, Tulsidas has contrived it in such a way that Shiva worships Sri Rama and Sri Rama worships Shiva. He has made them friends and mutual admirers, so then their respective devotees also become friends.

Now Rama is worshipped in the temple of Shiva, and the temple of Rama has the shivalingam, so there is no clash, no difference. Something like this will have to be done to end the animosity between Hindus and Muslims. Parliament cannot solve this problem nor can a political leader; only a saint can do this. Nobody else can do anything about it. The government cannot solve problems of religion and religious communities. They can only be dissolved, resolved and solved by a saint.

The Badrinath temple in the Himalayas is a temple dedicated to Vishnu or Narayana. But the priest who performs the worship is a Shaiva. Today in India there is no enmity between the Shaiva and Vaishnava sects. You are not surprised to see them harmonized, but when these traditions

were pioneered, the relationship between the Shaivas and the Vaishnavas was like that between the Hindus and the Muslims. They thirsted for each other's blood, but not any longer.

Temple of the people

Today in the month of Baisakh (May), when the door of Lord Badrinath opens, the first offering comes from Bhutan, which is a Buddhist country. The first offering is a cow and any fragrant liquid. The second offering comes from Tehri Maharaj, who is a Hindu today but was a Buddhist six hundred years ago. The ghee used in the temple used to come from Tehri and even today the tradition continues. The offerings to Badrinath temple come from Sikkim, Bhutan, Tehri and many other corners of India, and this is symbolic.

The reason for the popularity of Baidyanath temple is very simple. It is a temple of the people; the trustees are the only managers. The person who rings the bell is a local fellow. During the period when the temple is functioning, people go there and at the right time they play the gong or clean the precincts. All the people from the village have a share in the temple and the temple earnings are distributed according to the relevant documents of the temple. The trust was established for the management and upkeep of the temple. When a government trust is set up, a membership has to be formed.

There are many routine jobs which are entrusted to the local people, like ringing the bell, cleaning, making wicks for the ghee and oil lamps, cooking prasad, making flower garlands for the Lord, making thread for the garlands and playing the drums. There are also cobblers who make the drums. All these people go and work in the temple but they do not receive salaries. They get their respective percentage from the annual earnings of the temple. Suppose the annual earning is a few lakhs or even a crore. A certain percentage will go into a reserve fund and the rest will be distributed among the local workers, according to the standardized

practice. The same system prevails at Badrinath temple in the Himalayas. The temple musicians such as the drum and flute player all receive their due share from the annual earnings of the temple.

Isn't everyone told to follow his or her own religion or dharma in the *Bhagavad Gita*?

In this context the meaning of dharma is not religion, but property, the natural trait or characteristic. The dharma of fire is to burn, of water to flow. In the language of chemistry, dharma is the property. In Sanskrit, the natural property is called dharma. The dharma of the eyes is to see. The mind, senses and heart all have their own dharma. You depend totally on the dharma of the body, senses, mind and heart, but these are not really dependable. The only dependable thing is God Himself and nothing less. So, if you want to surrender or seek help from someone or if you need a dependable friend, then turn to God alone. The senses are not your dharma. This is the general meaning.

The meaning of *swadharma* is one's duty towards others, towards life. Here *swadharma* does not mean religion. The *Bhagavad Gita* does not talk about religion. It does not speak about dharma in the sense of Hindu, Vedic, Vaishnava, Shaiva or Buddhist dharma. The word 'dharma' is not used in this context. It is used purely scientifically and does not mean religion at all. It means the natural property, duty and right conduct. That is the scientific meaning of dharma. It does not mean a religion like Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Judaism or Zoroastrianism. They are known as *sampradaya*, sects or traditions, not as dharma.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* (3:35), it is said:

*Sraiyaansvadharmau vigunah paradharmaat svanushtithaat
Svadharmai nidhanam shrayah paradharmau bhayaavahah.*

"It is better to follow one's own dharma, though imperfect, than the dharma of another, though performed well. It is better to perish following one's own dharma." Although the dharma of another may appear superior, it could be

disastrous for you. Everybody has a natural quality, a natural disposition or aptitude. You may have a natural flair for music, another may have a natural inclination towards hard physical work. Someone may have an aptitude for writing, another for public speaking and someone else only for parroting.

This is not one's nature as such. It is called aptitude or temperament in psychological jargon. Everyone is endowed with a natural bent towards a particular thing. It is a gift of nature, but not everyone leads his life according to his aptitude or temperament. One thinks that by becoming an engineer he will make good money, but actually he should have been an artist because from childhood he had an artistic temperament. One may want to become a leader but he cannot because he is too naive. A leader has to be a sharp person who can convince people.

So, everyone has their own particular temperament and nature. The rose, the neem, the sandalwood, the ashok, the tulsi, each plant has its own characteristic flower. That special individual characteristic is called dharma. One must follow one's own dharma in life. Suppose I had not followed my own dharma but had enlisted in the police department. What would the result have been? In those days everyone aspired to join the police force, to become an inspector or a tehsildar. Now everybody wants to be an engineer or a doctor. Some time ago the wave was to become a leader or politician, but now that trend has cooled down. Now people will think twice before becoming a leader, because a leader today cannot even get anticipatory bail!

Lord Krishna is not teaching Arjuna about religion, about a sect or a tradition, not even about an abstract philosophy. Rather he is telling him how a man has to behave in this life. There is no such thing as *manava dharma*, human religion; it is too idealistic. It is true that your dharma is one, but human beings do not belong to one mentality. You do not have the same climate or the same food everywhere. You cannot eat rice at the North Pole. Different people have different coloured skins, different



Kirtan at Ram Naam Aradhana



Pandit Jasraj offering his worship



Sri Swamiji



Informal satsang

languages. French people cannot even pronounce 'h'. Swami Devatmananda, a French lady, once asked me, "Are you angry?" when actually she meant hungry.

Humanity is diverse, just as seasons and colours are diverse. So to think that there can be one religion for the whole of humanity is as foolish as well as a dangerous and dictatorial idea. If you are thinking of religion, you should think of a personal religion. I have a personal religion, you have a personal religion, everyone has a personal religion. But what happens then? Our personal religions come closer together, so we say we are Christians or Buddhists.

To have one religion and one language for the whole of humanity is not a good idea. A garden where only mango trees grow is monotonous. There should be mangoes, apricots, peaches, grapes and walnuts. If only dates are grown, what will happen in Belgium, Holland, England and France? In my personal opinion, one religion, one language, one government, one humanity is a dangerous, non-progressive and impossible idea. Moreover, to impose such an idea encroaches on man's individual freedom.

I am myself. I do not want to conform to your ideas or way of thinking and you should not conform to mine. I am me and you are you. If you check the thumbprints of five million people none will be the same. It is God's intention that the world has to be diverse. Humanity should not be regimented into one nation, one religion, one language where everybody says, "Good morning." Why should you say, "Good morning?" Some may say, "Namaste", some may shake hands, others may touch the feet or hug each other. These are different forms of expression. That is called art. In art there is diversity and where there is no diversity there can be no art.

The definition of an artist is very simple: one who looks at an object from different angles and defines it differently. Such a person is called an artist, a poet, a philosopher. Otherwise one is just a politician, saying there is no distinction between caste, colour or race. This is a funny idea. French and Slavic people are definitely different.

They have to be different and it is good that they are. If all the people in this world were the same, just imagine how monotonous it would be. When I was in Holland in 1968 I met a Dutch couple. The man had a black child from a black wife and he said, "I wanted a change in my family from monotonous colours. I always had fair children and I just wanted a change." So maybe some of you would also like a change.

How can man exhaust his karma without creating more?

Before man attempts to exhaust his karma he must know what natural or real karma is and what man-made karma is. Social karma is very limited. Society tells you to do or not to do something. You are told to get up at a particular time in the morning, to eat or to abstain from certain foods, to marry a particular person. This is not real karma; it is social convention. There is no fruit born of this. You can either abide by this social code or flout it. Conventions and traditions are age old. If one doesn't follow these conventions people say, "He is adharmic. He has touched a fellow of the sweeper caste and eaten food with him, so his dharma has been polluted."

Real karma is related to the dharma within. It is connected with *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha* and *iccha*, with passion, anger, avarice and desire. Actually when you use the word 'karma', it does not mean your social traditions and social behaviours. You do not have to worry about that. For example, I used to drink. Do you think it has made any karma? No. It was a tradition in my family; everybody drank. In my family everybody ate meat; we were basically or primarily meat-eaters. I never knew that one should not eat meat. Do you think that created a karma for which I have to undergo a lot of punishment elsewhere? No. First of all you have to discern what karma is and what karma is not. Any act that is imposed on you by society, according to events and situations, according to your local religion, is not a karma.

Karma rests on dharma

The indications of dharma are enumerated in the Mahabharata as: *Dhritih kshamaa damo-asteyam shaucham-indriya-nigraha*; *Dheervidyaa satyamakrodho dashakam-dharma lakshanam* – “Steadiness, forgiveness, self-restraint, non-stealing, purity, sensory control, intellect, learning, truthfulness and absence of anger.” These are the ten characteristics of dharma, the codes of conduct that should be followed. *Adharma* means wrongful actions that should not be done. Karma rests on the basis of the ten signs of dharma. One gets the fruit of such actions either in this lifetime or in another. Some karmas can be eradicated by *purushartha*, by human effort, but there are others which cannot. By the grace of guru, drinking can be overcome, eating meat can be given up. Those karmas can be exhausted but the *prarabdha*, or inner karmas, cannot be eliminated totally.

Some of the *prarabdha* karmas cannot be cured and hence they have to be endured and gone through. When you harvest wheat or rice paddy, potential seeds are produced. If you sow them they will germinate and grow, and then you have to harvest it again. There is no other remedy. The consequence of karma is unavoidable. You do not go by technical definitions, but a karma is a karma. There are certain karmas you have to undergo, there is no way out. Now you should not bother thinking whether it is accumulated karma or destined karma. They are technical divisions that we sometimes make in order to explain things. We call it area number one, two and three, but actually it is one field. Karma is karma.

Master of karma

Karma is like seeds of rice, wheat, coriander, corn or vegetables. They mature again and again. Due to karma we cannot act according to our free will. It is egoistic to say, “If I do good karma, I will negate the bad karma. If I go to satsang or perform two or three works of charity, I will negate my bad karma.” Although it is true that when you do good karma, the bad karma is balanced. Still the point is,

are you free to do good karma? No, there is someone in you who is responsible, who guides you to do and not to do. So it is said, *Twayaa Hrisheekeshena hridisthitena, yathaa niyuktosmi tathaa karomi* – “I follow the dictates of Hrishikesha, the Lord seated within my own heart.”

Hrishikesha means Lord of the indriyas, of the senses, the inner Lord. You are in my heart. As you ask me, so I do. The indweller of our heart, in each and everyone, is an effulgent, conscious, intelligent, ever aware Self, which you call I, not the egoistic I, but the cosmic I, the light. It is through Him that the karmas can be balanced or negated. If man thinks he is free, he is wrong. If a man thinks he can do good acts, he is mistaken. We are like puppets.

In Kishkindhakanda of *Ramacharitamanas*, it is said:

*Umaa daaru joshit ki naaeen
Sabahin nachaavat Raamu Gosaaeen
Taba Sugreevahi aayasu deenhaa
Mritaka karma bidhivata saba keenhaa.*

Daaru means wooden doll. Shiva tells Parvati that *Gosainji*, a name for the Lord, makes everyone dance like puppets. *Go* means indriyas or senses, *sai* means swami. The master of the indriyas or the senses is called Gosai. Govinda or Gosain mean the same thing. The master of the senses is Govinda, who is making everybody dance like a puppeteer makes the puppets dance. He is the director, scriptwriter, project officer and designer. This is the ultimate fact.

When you have youth, lots of money and many friends you may not realize this. When a man is educated, wealthy and happy, he seems very powerful. He can purchase anything, do anything, so he does not care for the reality. However, when a man has everything but begins to question, “Am I the master of my karma, of my circumstances, of myself?” then he realizes that, “I am not the master of myself.” Do I control my respiratory system, circulatory system, digestive system, nervous system, muscular system, excretory system or mind? No, and if that is the case, how can I say that I am the doer of karma?

What karma can you perform? You do not even know what happens to food when it goes into your stomach or how faeces are formed. How do you think? Can you explain the thought process? You can only explain thinking in terms of modern psychology, which is imperfect. Thinking is a process that is going on within you. Who is doing it? Can you explain what understanding is? How is it happening? So how can you say you are the master of the situation? You are not the master of any situation, even of your own body. So first of all you have to discover who is the master of this body, mind, perception, recognition? Who is the master of your life?

How were you born? For nine months you lived in your mother's womb. The same is true for all creatures – cows, donkeys, snakes, chickens. A foetus is conceived, it is born, it grows, it dies. You were formed in the womb in exactly two hundred and seventy days. You did not make this law, nor did your father, mother, grandfather or grandmother. Therefore, you have to know who is the controller of the situation, the *sutradhara*. When you set out to find the sutradhara, only one word appears before you – God. You can also say Rama or Govinda because that is the name you have given Him, although in reality He has no name.

Markandeya's vision

You write a symbol and say 'a'. Why do you say 'a'? Why not say 'k'? But you have given it the name 'a'. In the same way you have given God a name, go ahead and find out who He is and how He does it. In the Puranas there is a story about Rishi Markandeya who entered Brahma loka through the stem of a lotus. He saw how Brahma, the cosmic creator, creates the universe, Vishnu looks after it and Shiva destroys it. He saw the existence of different planes, the sun and the moon, but ultimately he felt there was no end to it. You cannot reach the end of the thread, so he came back.

Rishi Markandeya said, "There is no end to this thread. Who cares about who made it or even why or how he made it? Do not worry about it." In his imagination he kept a

beautiful picture of a newborn boy lying on a small banyan leaf with his toe in his mouth. That is called Bala Mukunda. In *Krishnashtakam* it is said:

*Karaaravindena padaaravindam
Mukhaaravinde viniveshayantam
Vatasya patrasya pute shayaanam
Baalam Mukundam manasaa smaraami.*

“In my heart I remember the infant God on the banyan leaf.”

There his adventure ended and this happens with everyone. It has also happened to me after reading Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya and other philosophers. I read all the books, even the Bible and the Koran. I thought, at least I'll get some idea about God. Then I thought, nothing is working! I can talk a lot, but what is so great about talk? I can go on talking for hours endlessly. I can write, but how do I know you will understand?" So I said to myself, "Stop all this at once. Throw away the books, they are of no use." The Sufi saint, Mansoor, also had the same realization when he said:

*Musallah phaad tasbeehaa tod
Kitaaben daal paaneemen
Pakad too dasta pharishtonkaa
Ghulaam unkaakahaataa jaa.*

Kitaaben means the Bible, the Koran, etc. *Kitaaben daal paaneemen* means 'throw the books into the water'.

Continuous awareness of God

If you really want to meet God then the heart has to be set on God alone. It should not flicker at all. Again Mansoor has said:

*Agar hai shauk milane ka,
To haradama lou lagaataa jaa;
Jalaakar khudanumaai ko,
Bhasma tana para lagaataa jaa.*

If you want to reach God your mind should always be fixed there. Even if you are with your wife or child, girlfriend or boyfriend, the mind has to be there with God. The word *lou* means 'the ever-burning flame of the lamp'. The flame keeps burning and you can see it.

What is that flame? It is not one thing; it is a sequence of many events taking place. If you photograph the flame you will find it is a sequence. It is not one continuity, but one sequence followed by another and another in continuity. That is what is meant by the flame. It is like a film in which all the frames are separate, but when it moves at a certain speed there is continuity. That is *lou*. *Lou* is like the mind, a continuum of diverse sequences. Thought is not the mind, it is a product of the mind. Emotion is a product of the mind, it is not the mind. An idea is a product of the mind, it is not the mind. Similarly, this light is a product of the sun, it is not the sun.

You should not think that the thoughts are the mind. The mind should be related to time. It should be conceived as particles. Just as you see light particles and photons, likewise the mind should be seen as particles in relation to time. The mind and time both move together because time is one aspect of the mind. When time, space and object come together, these three are called the mind; they constitute the mind. When you separate them, when there is fission not fusion, then there is nothing. Then the mind is like the frame of a film. When the mind is moving in sequence, that is called *lau*, and your awareness should always be fixed on it.

Suppose you have a very serious problem. You eat, you sleep, you go to the toilet, you go to the office or to work, you go to the shop, you meet your friends, but the problem is always lurking somewhere in your mind. In the same way you must think of God continuously. That man who is absolutely attuned to God will also do karma, will also undergo and reap the consequences, but it does not affect him. Then he sees everything as in a video film; he becomes a witness of the part that he is enacting.

Eternal law of life

There is no end to karma. Even in *jivanmukti*, liberation, there is karma. Even if you are liberated you have karma. Even if you are a man of God you have karma. Christ, Mohammed, Rama and Krishna all had karma, I have karma and you too have karma. No one can escape karma. As long as you have a body you have karma. As long as you are a part of Prakriti you have karma, and you remain a part of Prakriti, even when you are liberated. Even when you attain *videhamukti*, disembodiment, there is still karma for twenty-one days.

Existence is the last karma, not action itself, but existence. Just because you are, that existence is a karma. My guru, Swami Sivananda, just existed for twenty-one days. Somebody said “Swamiji, food,” and he ate from the spoon, “Swamiji, water,” and he drank. After twenty-one days, when the last karma called existence, coordination of life, stopped, he left his body. Man cannot survive without karma. If your karmas come to an end today, tomorrow you will go, Hari Om. Therefore, do not ever think of getting rid of karma as long as you want to enjoy this drama.

This point has been beautifully illustrated in our Puranas. In the Mahabharata, in Bhishmaparva and other parvas, there are a lot of discussions on karma. This concept must be properly explained because karma is the salt of creation. Not only human beings, the sun, moon, planets and stars also perform karma. They are constantly moving, dying and being born. There is activity, motion, growth and decay. They are doing karma because they are following a law. The moon follows a law and therefore an astrologer or astronomer can predict an eclipse that will happen ten thousand years in the future. He can do this because he understands the law.

That is exactly what Gargi said to Yajnavalkya in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (3:8:9): *Etasya vaa aksharasya prashaasane Gaargi suryaachandramasau vidhritau tishthata etasya vaa aksharasya prashaasane Gaargi dhaavaaparthivyaau vidhriti tishthata etasya vaa aksharasya*. “The sun and moon

rotate on separate paths and never collide with each other.” Gargi called this *aksharasya prashaasane*, the government of the imperishable, not the government of India or America but the imperishable government. In everyday life, when we see the cosmos, the universe, we always see a law. Laws can’t be accidental; they do not exist by chance. Laws are made by that intelligent being whom people call God, Rama, Allah, Brahman, Arihant, Buddha. Karma is also one of the names of God; it is synonymous with God. The Naiyayikas, the logicians, call Him *karta* and the Mimamsakas call Him karma. He is the Lord of the three worlds, of all the worlds.

Unknowable truth

Ultimately we have to go to Him, so there is no use discussing karma and dharma. We discuss it because we have to say something to people during satsang. But for myself, the only thing to do is sit down quietly and think, yes all is good. Sometimes the flower blooms, sometimes it withers. Both are good, aren’t they? Even if you say no, the flowers will wither all the same. You live on this Earth and you know the Earth rotates at the rate of so many miles per hour. Now, if someone asks you, as an inhabitant of the Earth, whether you are moving forward or backward, how will you reply? You won’t know that you are moving at all. The Earth is moving forward at so many miles per hour. It is rotating around its own axis like a top, but you cannot experience this movement or rotation. What is meant by forward movement cannot even be explained.

One man asked another, “What is the taste of potassium cyanide?” The other man replied, “Try it and see.” Then the first man said, “If I eat cyanide, how will I live to tell the taste?” The other man suggested, “Hold up one finger for sweet, two for salty and three for sour, according to the taste you experience.” However, after taking the cyanide the man simply could not indicate the taste because he died before he could raise his fingers. So the question remained unanswered. This means that while walking on the spiritual path you do not know where you are heading. You feel as if

you are drifting on the breeze. You are seeing Ghanshyam and pining away while gazing upon this vision. You do not know where you are going.

Our divine parents

After all, who is the owner of the house? Neither are you the master of the house nor its mistress. The whole world belongs to God and all our problems are His problems. God is the head of this family. He has all these idiotic children who are constantly demanding, “Papa, give me more pocket money; Papa, give me a car; Papa, give me a TV; Papa, give me a job; Papa, give me a house; Papa, give me an increment; Papa, give me a promotion; Papa, give me good health; Papa, please do not let me die.” But Papa is tired of all this.

Lakshmi is tired of giving pocket money. Of course, she is very rich but the more she gives the more spoilt you become. In the evening you go to a discotheque, dance, drink, take out young girls and have a nice time at the beach. And she knows it. Sometimes she stops your pocket money and then you have a problem. She stops your pocket money because the head of the family, the father, does nothing. It is Devi, the mother, who does everything.

In fact, when the child asks his father for pocket money he will just be given a slap and told, “Get out of here, you idiot. You don’t study, you don’t work and you dare to ask for pocket money. You stupid boy, you deserve a good thrashing.” Then the child goes to his mother and says, “Mummy, I want some money.” The mother replies, “No, I gave you some yesterday and you misused it.” Then the child cries, “Oh mummy, please.” So the mother says, “Okay, tomorrow I will give you some more.” So she gives him some money, toffees and chocolates.

However, the truth is that God is the master of this house, of the whole big world. Lakshmi is the housewife and we are all the immature, puerile, stupid children. Just as children forget their parents once they get married, similarly we too forget our divine parents once we come into

this world. We should consider God to be the Father of this global household, the Divine Mother as the housewife and we as the idiot children. After playing pranks all day, we go home and our meals are ready waiting for us.

Everything is Lakshmi

Children do not have to worry or think because their mother worries and thinks about them. When they go home in the evening she is ready with cooked food. Her children never worry about her. In the same way, God worries more about us than we worry about Him. When you return home in the evening your dal, roti and rice are ready. Mother is waiting with all the food she has prepared and even if you don't want it, she says, "Eat, eat, eat." If your ordinary mother can give so much love, care and thought for your well-being, just think what the Divine Mother can do. She has an immense number of children and she looks after the growth of the trees and plants as well as everything else in creation.

Every year when the leaves on this mango tree grow, they are so beautiful. One day they are red and brown and green. Next morning they grow a little more. The grass, flowers, children and cows all grow and they are Lakshmi. Lakshmi means wealth, prosperity, auspiciousness and beauty. So we call her the Divine Mother. If you do not like the Indian Lakshmi, make a French, Spanish, Belgian or Dutch Lakshmi. If you do not want to see her in a sari, you can have her in trousers. Lakshmi does not even mind wearing bikinis because she lives in the ocean. Water is the origin of growth and prosperity. Water is the primordial source of life, of all creation.

What is the meaning of Kali standing with one foot on Shiva?

Kali standing on Shiva is a tantric symbol which cannot be discussed in the open. It is a part of tantric symbology. Kali means Devi in the height of her passion. Nobody will tell you the inner meaning. I will tell you something about it, picking up fragments from here and there, but nobody will

tell you the essential covert meaning as it is an aspect of tantric sadhana.

What is Chhinnamasta? She cuts off her own head and exhibits it on her hand. What is the symbolic meaning of this? Who does it? You do not do it. You do not realize it. When you listen to what I say, that is understanding, not realization. You only understand, you have to realize. It should become a part of your experience that He is doing it. Just my saying it is not enough. It has to be your realization, your first hand experience.

Is tantra talking about the male and female inside as well as the male and female outside? Sometimes I have funny dreams of being pregnant and having breasts, although I am a man.

Those could be symbolic dreams or they could be tantric dreams. You do not have to evaluate them. But the fact is that male and female are external and objective as well as internal and subjective. We do not have to use the words male and female. For the time being let us use other terms for the two systems of creation: one is positive, the other negative. When I say positive or negative, I am using the terms as in electronics: positive and negative, plus and minus. There are two systems and when they are separated nothing happens. When these two systems are united, then there is life, light, cognition, perception, action, everything that you see around you.

The same process happens within. When negative and positive join, then there is progeny, reproduction, birth of new life. According to tantra the purpose of these two systems coming together is threefold: progeny, pleasure and heightened consciousness, awakening or samadhi. These are the three purposes. Even in this external world, when the two systems, positive and negative, come together there is production of electricity. The same thing happens in the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms. It happens in chemical reactions and in the atmosphere, even in nuclear fission. When time and space come together the same thing

happens. They come towards each other from opposite poles. Each is moving in the opposite direction, just as when moving from the south you move towards the north and when moving from the north you move towards the south. Each moves in the opposite direction and this is the process of union.

In the process of union the two have to come together from opposite sides. Time and space meet at the nucleus. There is no fixed point called the nucleus. The meeting point is called the nucleus, navel, bindu. At that time an explosion takes place. The same thing happens inside and outside, in a plant, in a chemical, in an animal. The two particles or elements travel in opposite directions towards each, and when they meet there is fusion, a nuclear explosion. In men and women this union results in a child.

On the mental plane there is also an explosion. When Moses released his tribe from Israel and went to the mountain of Sinai, what happened? On that mountain he received the Ten Commandments. How did he receive the Ten Commandments? When the two, his physical self and his spiritual self, became one. At a certain moment in time, because of some extraordinary happening within him, there was an explosion and that explosion was the Ten Commandments. The same thing can be said about the prophet Mohammed. He went to the mountain where he received the commandment, the Koran.

When the two elements, the individual self and the cosmic self, travel in opposite directions, they meet at a point and there is an explosion. Exactly the same thing happens with a nuclear bomb. They use the same word nucleus, nuclear bomb, atom bomb. Similarly, some call the Vedas revelation, but I call them explosion. The same thing happens in many talented writers, poets, artists, and musicians, even in talented politicians, thieves and criminals.

Satsang 12

December 11, 1996, Afternoon

We have come here for the Ram Naam Aradhana, but what does the word ‘aradhana’ mean? How is it connected to man’s life and his spiritual endeavour or sadhana?

The question is very bitter. You could have asked a sweet question connected with Sri Rama, Sri Krishna or the gopis. Anyway, let me answer. At some time or other every human being, whether from India or a distant place abroad, thinks of God and accepts his existence. There are different reasons for this. Not all people worship God out of pure love and devotion. Such devotees are rare and they are not easily found on the highways and byways. They are inconspicuous and remain hidden. They may get a mention in history but they are not common.

Most people worship God and sing His name due to four different motives. The first motive is to ask for help or a solution from God when one is in a fix, in misery or beset with problems. At such times, when one becomes desperate, helpless, agonized and frightened, then one remembers God and surrenders to Him to overcome the crisis. For example, a man may be dragged into a court case; there may be an official enquiry by the government against him; he may have income tax problems; his young son may fall sick. There are countless predicaments and problems that may confront a

man. When such a man turns to God because he is caught in a calamity, he is called a desperate devotee.

The second kind of devotee desires something that he is unable to attain in life. He turns to God to ask for something, to beg. For example, everyone desires a son. They believe that without a son there will be no future breadwinner in the family nor anyone to perform the last rites after death. So everyone wants a son to earn money, to support the father and provide for his well-being during the onward journey after death. A son is believed to buy a ticket for the father's posthumous journey by performing his last rites. Some people also worship God to ask for a job, for prosperity in business, to pass exams and so on. Such bhaktas are called devotees with desire; they have an axe to grind. These are selfish bhaktas who seek gratification of their personal desires from God.

The third type of devotee is the *jignasu bhakta*, who is curious to know what God is. His devotion to God is motivated by a search into reality, into the nature of God and the soul. He wants to know what rebirth is. The number of such devotees is limited, but there are some like this. They leave their homes and the temptations of material life to enquire into God and spirituality. They have a spiritual goal. I was one such devotee but not any longer. I have taken my name off the list of such *jignasu* devotees, but when I started off on the spiritual path I was inspired by this type of devotion.

I was beset with transcendental questions such as what is life, what is the nature of the world, where does man come from, where does he go after death, what is the sun, what is the moon, what is creation? This is the *jignasu* devotee. He has a questioning mind and seeks knowledge about God by every means available: singing bhajans in His praise, doing kirtan or japa, performing austerities, practising meditation or pratyahara, withdrawing from the world of the senses. Such devotees try out dharana, dhyana and samadhi, prompted by the urge to know God. The number of such devotees is not large. The first two categories contain

the highest percentage of humanity; most people belong to them.

The fourth type of devotee is the lover of God, like the gopis or Hanuman. Such bhaktas have nothing to ask of God. They have no selfish motive; they seek no benefit from God. They do not want happiness and success in life, solutions to their worldly problems or release from sorrow and suffering. They turn to God out of love for Him. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Mira were such devotees of pure love. I have cited them as an example, but such devotees are a rarity. Even history mentions them as if by mistake.

These are the four types of devotees who worship God. That worship is called *aradhana*, which means worship of God by chanting His name, singing His glory, performing pooja to Him with ritualistic precision, or by mental absorption. Ritualistic precision means with articles of pooja like the conch, bell, flowers and leaves. Worship of God can be done at the mental level also without this paraphernalia or external means. Reading *Hanuman Chalisa*, *Ramacharita-manas* or singing kirtan are also forms of worship.

Whenever you remember God, whenever you worship Him with any of the aforesaid attitudes, it becomes aradhana. You may cry out to Him in your adversity to remove your sorrows and sufferings, you may ask his favour for wish fulfilment, you may turn to Him for knowledge about Himself or you may love Him just for the sake of love. All these types of worship are called aradhana. One type of devotee prays to God to save him from a crisis, the second type begs Him to fulfil his own wishes and desires for wealth and happiness, the third type questions God for knowledge and divine experience, and the fourth type seeks His love for its own sake. All these devotees remember God and worship Him with different motives, but what they do constitutes aradhana.

Festival of joy

The Ram Naam Aradhana that has been organized here has only one objective. You have all come here and that is good,

because without your congregation the aradhana cannot fructify and continue. Why? Lord Shiva himself has finally declared, everybody believes and it is a fact, that whenever the name of Rama is chanted, kirtan is sung about Him, any festival is held in his honour, be it his birth, celestial marriage with Sita, his exile into the forest, his return to Ayodhya and coronation, Lord Shiva has to be present to participate in it.

Last year the Sat Chandi Maha Yajna was conducted here. When Swami Niranjan asked me what my plans were this year, I told him that I had none as it involved a lot of trouble. Then one day as I was reading *Ramacharitamanas*, the idea flashed across my mind that the best way to entice Lord Shiva is to chant the name of Lord Rama or to arrange a festival connected with Rama and the events of his life. It could be his birth, his coronation, his wedding, his exile or any other event related to the Lord.

Everything happens in its own way. When a desire rises in the mind of God, He also arranges for its fulfilment. We acquired this piece of land where you are now sitting soon after I decided to hold this festival. Then I told the people that the name of Rama would be chanted here in collective worship. So they thronged to this place and the Aradhana started in full swing. This Aradhana is neither a conference nor a seminar. Please do not call it by such names. It is a festival, a celebration, a carnival of joy.

Aim of the Aradhana

God can be worshipped in many different ways, not by just one particular method. Naam samkirtan is the easiest way of aradhana or worship. You may do *abhishek*, oblations with water, or skip it. You may do *arati*, waving of lights, or skip it. You may or may not chant the mantra. You may worship Him with sandalwood paste, flowers or leaves, but when you worship Him by chanting His name, you gain the maximum and spend nothing. Why? Because when you chant the name of God it pervades and charges the atmosphere everywhere. An energy field is created and whoever comes into this field,

sits in it, lives in it or passes through it is touched by that energy from within.

In this Ram Naam Aradhana we have kept only the one aim of compelling Lord Shiva to descend upon this place. This is a certainty and everyone must believe it to be a fact. The great saints and mahatmas have also told us, and when great souls say something they mean it; it is not fantasy or fiction. Divine people do not utter words casually or by a slip of the tongue. Mahatmas are serious-minded people. Saint Tulsidas regarded the scriptures and philosophies seriously, not as a childish prank. Such a sincere person can never speak nonsense.

In the *Ramacharitamanas*, Lord Shiva himself tells this to Parvati. Tulsidas has also conveyed the same thing to us through the words of Lord Rama. The essence of their utterances is that wherever the name of Rama is chanted, wherever Sri Rama is worshipped, Lord Shiva is bound to come. He will come, not to give you darshan, but to listen to the name of Rama. The bliss of Ram Naam, how joyous it feels! How wonderful it is when we are singing his praises. I enjoy it very much. I have said that the festival must start with a program of dance, because Lord Shiva will come and he prefers dance first and foremost above anything else. He is Nataraja, the graceful dance teacher, and also a dancer himself. Therefore, dance is necessary. We began the festival with Bharatnatyam and everyone enjoyed it very much. Lord Shiva is a dancer and so it was befitting to start the festival with dance.

Installation of Sita

There was one more consideration. I cannot send Rama into exile during this festival held in his honour, nor can I have his birth celebration as he is already born. So I decided to undertake something which would ensure Lord Shiva's arrival in our midst. That was to celebrate the wedding of Sri Rama and Sita. When Swami Niranjan went to Jaipur for a yoga program, he brought back an exquisite marble image of Rama. I said, "What is the use of this

bachelor Rama? You should have brought the daughter-in-law, Sita, to help out with the household chores.” Of course, that was just a joke.

Someone asked me where Sita should be brought from. When Bombay was suggested I said, “No, a Bombay Sita would be very modern and would not suit the people of Rikhia. Sita from Jaipur knows how to pull a little veil over her face! Sita from Bombay would look like a tomboy. She cuts off her hair and both Sri Rama and Sita would look very much alike; there would be very little difference.” It would be difficult to tell the Bombay Rama and Sita apart. I thought it was better to bring in Sita from Rajasthan; she has a beautiful blend of urbanity and womanly modesty.

Now she is on her way here. On the 15th she will wed Rama with due pomp and ceremony. There will be a band for their wedding. That band will not be like a city band; it will be our own rural band with local, unsophisticated music. I am speaking now in a happy and playful way because I am talking about God. You cannot talk about Him with a long face and a bothersome grimace, as though you have taken castor oil. We must talk about God in good cheer. The name of God must be taken with delight and joy.

Christians visit church on Sundays with a long, serious ‘Sunday face’, without laughter or cheer. They look straight ahead with a steady gaze, neither here nor there. That is not on. Everything connected with God should be full of joy. So we will celebrate a grand wedding for Sri Rama and Sita and install Sita next to Rama. From the 15th to the 24th, Sita will also be there next to the Lord to receive and witness the aradhana. When I am telling you about the aradhana I have to put in some chutney and pickle to stimulate your tastebuds, otherwise your meals would be very dry and tasteless.

Establishing a relationship with God

If you worship women, wealth, happiness and sensual enjoyment, you will obtain them, but they will inevitably bring misery and sorrow in their trail, just as everything

brings its own shadow along with it. Everything in this world has a material shadow. Whatever you wish for in this world you will get – a son, a wife, wealth, prosperity, success, fame, honour and status. But these will also bring sorrow and unhappiness. However, when you worship God with a heart full of love and you want to establish a relationship with Him, then there is no question of sorrow or unhappiness.

The second thing that I want to tell you is that it is very easy to worship God. You can easily perform His pooja with sandalwood paste, incense, rice and coconut, sing his arati or say, “Namah namah”, chant *Hanuman Chalisa* or *Rama Raksha Stotram*, and offer *abhishek*, oblations with water. In the coming age of science you can have a robot to do all of this for you. You can even play a tape instead of singing bhajans and kirtan. It is good to talk about Him, to hear about Him, to worship Him, but to establish a relationship with Him is very difficult. One who has struck a relationship with God and clearly recognized that relationship has already attained God.

Establishment and identification of the relationship with God is tantamount to the attainment of God. It is easy to worship God, to sing His praise, to hear His praise, to read about Him in books like the *Ramayana* and *Bhagavad Gita*, but to link oneself with God in a definite relationship and to actually feel that relationship in your heart is not easy. When you develop a particular relationship with another person, that particular feeling arises in your heart. For example, in the relationship between a master and a servant, the relevant emotion arises in the relationship. When a man connects with a woman, there is a particular relationship that gives rise to a corresponding feeling in the heart.

When you relate yourself to a man or a woman in a particular way, that feeling is stirred within you. Thus a particular feeling or emotional bond is created when a relationship is established. You have parental affection for your son, a romantic relationship with your wife and so

on. Similarly, when you have a relationship with God there arises a corresponding feeling within you. If you relate to God like a servant to a master, your heart gives rise to a feeling of servitude and meek obedience. It is exactly how the loyal and obedient servant in your house feels towards you, his master. In your house your servant serves you. He cleans your vessels, washes your clothes, does all the odd jobs for you and the attitude he has towards you is one of unquestioning obedience and service.

High sounding platitudes

If you say that you are the servant of God, but you do not feel it to be so in your heart, then it is just lip service. When you go on saying “Rama, Rama,” without devotion arising, then it is just parrot talk. You are parroting the words without meaning them. When you call God your husband, like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu or Mirabai did, then the same intense emotion that a wife feels for her husband should arise in your heart. If the emotion corresponding with the relationship does not arise in your heart, then it is mechanical, just empty prattle like a parrot.

A parrot keeps on repeating Rama, Rama, throughout its life, but at its dying moment it forgets to say Rama and emits its own natural bird sound. Whatever relationship, connection or bond you want to establish with God, it must give rise to the corresponding feeling within your heart. Only repeating Soham, Soham; Aham Brahmasmi, Aham Brahmasmi, and other such high sounding platitudes will not be effective if there is no emotion or feeling in what you are saying.

Our situation in life is such that, on the one hand, the world holds no reality for us on the three levels of consciousness, while, on the other hand, we cannot tolerate food without salt and we lose our temper at the smallest provocation! We are all very ordinary, mediocre people, not great souls like Sukdev. He was a realized soul, an aspirant who had arrived at the spiritual state inside out. We fall far too short of that mark! We lack that stature, that extra-

ordinary dimension, that capacity. However, even though we are all mediocre and ordinary people, we still have some type of relationship with God. This is certain, but we have not yet come to recognize exactly what that relationship is.

Range of the relationship

Certain relationships exist between man and God. You can relate to God as your father, mother, brother, friend, husband, master or *parameshwara*. God can also be your own soul or spirit. That is all. Within this range you have to search for your relationship with God. Never consider God as your in-law, nephew or uncle. You cannot have a superficial or legal relationship with God that is beyond the ones enumerated here. You can say:

Tvameva maataa cha pitaa tvameva
Tvameva bandhushcha sakhaa tvameva
Tvameva vidyaa dravinam tvameva
Tvameva sarvaam mama deva deva.

“You are my mother, father, brother, friend, light and master.” Your relationship with God can exist within this range. Sri Rama asked Hanuman, “Who am I to you?” Hanuman replied, “Oh Lord, as long as I am bound by body consciousness, as long as I identify with my body, I am your slave and servant.” All of us have this *dehatma buddhi*; our minds are conditioned by our bodies. We are tied down to our body in our consciousness; the focus of our thought is our body.

Therefore, as long as he was body-bound, Hanuman called himself the servant or attendant of Sri Rama. Then he said to Sri Rama, “When my buddhi, my intelligence, rises above the material world and I can think spiritually, then I would become a part, a fraction of you. When I am able to transcend even that stage and realize my spiritual self, when I identify with the soul and elevate my consciousness to the spiritual plane, then you and I are one and the same.”

*Dehabuddhyaa tu daasoaham
Jeevabuddhyaa tavaanshakah
Aatmabuddhyaa tvamevaahamiti me nishchitaamatih*

From the point of view of physical existence,
I am your slave.

From the point of view of the individual soul,
I am a fraction of your own Self.

From the point of view of spiritual existence,
I am You.

That is the purpose of this Aradhana festival, that we begin the search for our relationship with God right away and in real earnest. How am I related to God? Unless we discover our relationship with God, whatever we do is going to be futile. Of course, we can worship God, read books, perform pooja, go to the temple and church. That is all very good, but the most important thing for every one of us is to discover our existing relationship with God, because we are related to Him.

Purpose of this Aradhana

There is a connection. You are related to God but you have forgotten your relationship. If you say, “I am God”, “My Father and I are one”, or “Aham Brahmasmi”, you must have that feeling, that awareness. Similarly, if you say, “I am God’s wife, I am His better half,” then you must feel what a wife feels for her husband. If you have that feeling, then yes, you are His wife. If you say, “I am God’s servant,” you must feel that way, then it is all right.

Everybody says, “I am God’s servant.” There is nothing special about it, anyone can say it. But do you feel exactly the way your servant feels when he cooks for you, cleans your room, cleans your toilet, washes your clothes. He performs all kinds of chores for you. What is his feeling for you? That is the feeling you must have. So, the purpose of this Ram Naam Aradhana is to discover and experience your relationship with God, which somehow or other you have lost.

We are all jokers

The last point is that whatever I may say has no effect, it is meaningless. Rainwater falls on a raincoat and flows off. The raincoat is waterproof so it does not get drenched. Similarly, my words are ineffectual; they do not penetrate your heart. You do not grasp what I am saying and yet I go on talking because you ask me to talk. Similarly, Surdas has said, “A black blanket can never absorb any other colour.”

I do not like to talk, there is no fun in it! I went on talking for years and in the end I felt like a joker, an entertainer, talking to amuse you – and you go on listening. Do not take it amiss, but let me tell you that all these speakers are jokers. What is a joker? A joker is a public entertainer. We all sit here on the dais and address the people in English, Hindi and Sanskrit. We are jokers, that’s all. Go home from the Ram Naam Aradhana with this piece of my mind.

Satsang 13

December 12, 1996

The idea of Christ Kutir is a brand new one. No Christian institution in India has a Raghunath Kutir, and no mandir, temple or ashram has a Christ Kutir. This is the only place where both Raghunath and Christ are worshipped under the canopy of one institution. We will certainly not build a church here. This is a cottage for Christ, a little house where he will live. Everyone has a cottage, so Christ should have a cottage. If Christ has a church, all of us must have a church of our own. A place where Christ can be worshipped along with Raghunath is only possible in India because of the religious tolerance that exists within the people here. However, if any one of you decides to have a Raghunath Kutir in Europe, it will cause a lot of problems. People there will see that it is sacked; they will bombard it!

What do you think of Father Bede Griffiths, a missionary who came here forty years ago and wore geru?

The source of Christianity or any other religion is a realized man, not a politician. Whether Christ, Moses, Mohammed, Nanak or Zoroaster, the founder of a religion is one who has divinity in him, who has God in him, who is God. The problems arise later when this man has a large following. It is sure and certain that a politician will enter and use

the teachings for his own purpose, and thus a religion is initiated. However, no one has a right to convert a man from one religion to another. Conversion tampers with the basic right to religious freedom, but transformation is acceptable. If you have bad habits and I give you good habits, that is transformation.

Therefore, transformation and conversion are two different things. When Father Bede Griffiths came to India he knew very well that it was no use wearing a black robe. Black becomes very uncomfortable in the hot sun, whereas geru is very comfortable. If you wear geru there is no heat, but if you wear black it is very hot. This is one point. Another point is that a saint, a father or a monk must be identifiable by the public. India is a very big country in area as well as culture. It has diverse traditions and languages, with up to two hundred dialects. There are so many different systems and within this diversity a holy man must be able to be identified. For example, he is a holy man; he is a monk. He is a Vaishnava; he does not eat onion or garlic. He does not eat meat and he does not drink. Just by seeing that man you know at once not to bring onions from your kitchen. If a Vaishnava comes to your kitchen and has to say, "No, I cannot eat that food because it contains onion," it means you are dishonouring a guest.

Therefore, a Vaishnava or a Shaiva has to be identifiable. If it were a small country, there would be no problem. In India these sectarian concerns are observed in society, but in government offices and educational institutions they are not allowed. Religion is a private matter; it has nothing to do with the government. If you are in the army or the police, you don't wear a sectarian mark on your forehead and a rudraksha mala. That is your private life. India is not a theocratic country. Theocracy does not belong in government. A government has no business patronizing a religion. The head of a government may be a Christian, a Hindu or a Muslim, but his official behaviour should be secular. When the most senior officer appears in public, he is not acting in the capacity of a brahmin. He may actually

be a brahmin, but in office he is not a brahmin, he is a chief officer, that's all. So why are saints and religions sometimes not liked by people? Because of their followers.

Is our relationship with God established through free will or grace?

As far as ordinary karmas go there is a possibility of free will, but the relationship with God can never be attained through free will, it only comes with grace. For the last fifty years or so I have known that I should discover a relationship with God. I tried this way and that, but it never happened because I was always trying to work it out intellectually, through my mind, through reasoning or through study. When I came here, however, it just happened. I realized through every angle of reasoning that whatever had happened in the past fifty years or more was due to His grace, not my free will.

Genuine faith and conviction do not come through intellectual argument, but by the grace of God. You are free to consider yourself as His servant. Who can stop you? But do you really feel like a servant to Him? Do you have the same attitude as a servant who cleans your vessels, washes your clothes, cuts your grass, tends your children and cleans your toilet? Actually your mentality is like that of a master, but you call yourself His servant. The master and servant relationship can come only when God so wills it. The saints and sages emphasize this point alone.

Suppose you are on a boat in the middle of an ocean and all around you there are two and three metre high waves. Here is a crocodile and there is a whale. "Oh God," you cry, "save me from the ocean of samsara!" Don't the saints and sages say this? We are in the middle of an ocean and we don't know where the shore is. We are in midstream, neither at this shore nor the other, and we are helpless. However, the problem is that even though man is helpless he does not feel himself to be so. He thinks that he can do something and no matter how he tries to subjugate his ego, the 'I' still pops up. "Don't you worry, I can do it." This

‘I’ comes in between God and man, so every religion has suggested total humility, total submission, total absence of ego. “I am nothing, my Lord, Thy will be done.” “Thy will be done” means grace. The Christian saints have written this; it is all in print. Read it and believe it to be the entire truth, the ultimate reality.

I have not entered so many dimensions, but I do know that the world which seems very big to us is actually so small that it is useless even to talk about it. When you meditate you realize that there are many more suns bigger than yours. There are tens of millions of suns in the *Brahmanda*, in the numerous universes. There are countless such universes, so what will be the place of your Earth within this vastness? Is your Earth even a dot in the enormity of the cosmos? In that dot how big could India be? In that India how big is Delhi or Dhanbad? How big is your town, village or house? In that infinite space how big can you be?

Looking through this telescope, man cannot even be seen, but still he thinks of himself as so big! In reality we are non-entities in creation. We are not even a speck, an iota, in the infinite spacial dimension of the countless universes. Although you may think about this intellectually and try to visualize the dimensions of the cosmos, you really have no idea of the living beings that are dying each moment in the jungles and oceans of this Earth. It is all beyond your grasp and calculation. Even in a small space of limited dimensions you cannot count the microbes, and a microbe is also a living being.

What do you think about the increased use of chemical fertilizers in India?

Everywhere there are bad reports about chemical farming. Nowadays a lot of noise is being made against fertilizers and chemical farming around the world. People have written volumes against fertilizers and the use of chemicals in farming and maybe in India a ban will be put on the use of chemical fertilizers in the near future. They say it kills the beneficial bacteria and causes many illnesses like coughs,

colds and stomach upsets. A legal ban may also be in the offing, but now the moneyed farmers in India use chemical fertilizers recklessly.

One of the best fertilizers is produced from worm culture. You collect earthworms and keep them in a long shed. All the natural waste of the community is placed there. A little water is sprinkled over it and then the worms go on eating, excreting, eating and throwing it out. Finally the waste becomes a very rich, dry soil, which is collected, put into bags and stored. At the time of sowing seeds, you just spread this soil over the garden. This is considered to be a very good method of changing your garbage into manure.

Do the worms come by themselves?

No, but you can produce them. Worms would come naturally, but these days you will not find them because they die wherever a farmer uses chemical fertilizers. Now the agricultural community produces the worms and you can purchase them in shops. However, you have to be careful because they die if chemicals get into them. Even the kitchen waste that you feed them may have some chemicals in it. Cauliflower leaves, potato peel or any other vegetables you buy may contain chemicals, and if you give it to the worms they will die. So this subject has to be studied in detail.

The big ants that crawl around sweet shops and food waste eat all this rubbish and turn it into dry soil, which is very good manure. In our childhood we used to find those big ants everywhere. There were masses of them, especially in the rainy season, but now because of chemical fertilizers you don't see them anywhere. That is why I do not eat the fruit you bring here. I think it is better not to eat fruit that has been fed with chemical fertilizers.

The use of chemicals has become too widespread. Now mangoes are ripened with chemical powders. Bananas and mangoes are plucked green and then artificially ripened. This is the age of the quick buck. This Kali yuga is predominantly the age of *artha* and *kama*, amassing of wealth

and gratification of desires. At the same time, wherever you go there is squalor and pollution.

Countries in the eastern bloc, especially Yugoslavia, haven't had the chance to take the initiative and make decisions because of communism, yet people are greatly interested in yoga.

Yes, previously the eastern bloc was guided by the state in all affairs, but their destiny is not yet decided. Something might still come up. They are passing through a transitional period from communism to we don't know what. The gypsies in these countries have contributed a lot towards the relationship with India. Gypsies were originally from the northwest of India. They migrated from India seven or eight centuries ago during the Mongolian invasions under Genghis Khan and other leaders who knew nothing but genocide. The Mongolians would kill anyone and their hobby was picking up women. At that time the gypsies left their native land, the Hindukush, in Afghanistan.

Hindukush means the place where Hindus were massacred. The name was preserved in history but the meaning was suppressed, so it is not widely known. The Hindukush mountains take their name from the massacre of the Hindus, who were killed mercilessly and without count. As a result tens of millions of people became gypsies, moving westward and spreading into eastern Europe. Even today gypsies are nomadic and have not settled anywhere, except in Russia where they have a separate community.

I have met many gypsies in Europe. They live in one place for a year or two and then move on. They dance, sing, give shows, rear animals, run circuses, eat, drink, gamble and move on to other places. There are many gypsies in Rumania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia and other European countries. Gypsies have made great contributions to dance and music in the West. In fact, the Rumanian and Bulgarian dances that are performed wearing high-heeled shoes, long skirts and scarves are all gypsy dances. They play the flute, guitar and drums, and their style of music is very

fast, deep and moving. The *bansuri*, or Indian flute, is the same style as the gypsy flute.

When I spoke to the gypsies about Hindu culture they said, "Yes, we know about this. We love to hear the stories you are telling and we want to hear more and more." I said, "But you are Christian now, so if I go on telling you these stories about Rama, Krishna and Devi, it may not be agreeable to you." They said, "This is exactly what we want to hear. It is in our mind, heart and soul." They follow Christianity because they live with Christians, Roman Catholics and others, but they still keep some of their earlier traditions.

In the different countries I visited, the gypsies all knew that India had been their original home and that they had migrated from there to Europe. They drink a lot and when I told them that I was a non-drinker they countered by saying that Lord Shiva was addicted to bhang, so what is wrong with drink! I replied that Lord Krishna never drank. Thereupon they told me that Lord Rama ate meat and hunted his prey. Thus they showed me that they were well acquainted with Indian culture and mythology. I had to tell them that although Lord Rama went on hunting expeditions, he did not eat meat.

What is your view on the caste system in India?

You may like it or not, you may take it as good or bad news, but it is a fact that the Indian people have been ruined by the caste system. Whoever put this *samskara* of the caste system into people's minds has destroyed the very foundation of the nation. Until casteism is completely uprooted, the nation can never advance. No money, statesmanship, art or technology will really help India to progress unless it gets rid of its ingrained casteism.

Politicians have injected casteism into people's minds in the guise of ancient scriptural strictures in order to divide this nation into factions. It has become so deeply embedded that even educated people cannot free themselves from it. Casteism is the biggest cancer of this country, nothing else.

This cancer alone has destroyed this nation. By attacking this weak point, the invaders have been exploiting India all along. Whoever attacked India fully exploited this very divisive force.

Even today people do not understand the seriousness of these implications. They still think a brahmin is a god coming from the house of God, and a shudra is made unclean by none other than God Himself. They fail to see that you become a Christian, a Muslim or a brahmin by man-made traditions and customs. You are not born so; God has not made you so. You came out of the factory after nine months and were labelled so and so, just like cars come out of the factory and get brand names like Maruti or Fiat. One is born and gets the stamp 'brahmin'. This is the blunder of the people who put the stamp on.

Nobody listens to the wisdom of saints and sages such as Buddha, Mahavir, Nanak, Kabirdas, Tulsidas, Surdas or Gandhi. Nobody ever paid any attention to what these godmen preached. If they had listened to this saintly wisdom, the politicians could not have ruled over the people. Whoever enjoyed political power under any political system, whether monarchy, theocracy or democracy, did so on the basis of caste divisions. One is accepted as the king on the basis of his caste. Once a particular gentleman became a high court judge and a local *pradhan*, village chief, boasted of being the same caste as the judge. He made an immediate bond with him, even without knowing him personally.

This caste affinity or animosity is deeply imbibed; it cannot be effaced. A war with a foreign country can be ended, but the internal war within the castes of the country can never be stopped. You can end a war fought against an outsider, but when it is within the household and the family it is impossible to stop. A fight between husband and wife, father and son, brother and brother cannot end. The enmity between two brothers is much worse than that between two friends. You may avoid the enmity between friends but the enmity between brothers is unavoidable. That enmity ensues from their 'private secretaries', the wives. The brothers have

common blood, but their wives have no blood relationship with their in-laws.

Due to this enmity the Mahabharata war took place and nobody could stop it. Would our history have been different if that war had somehow been avoided?

Yudhishtira tried to avoid the Mahabharata war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Bhimsen was the only Pandava who adamantly supported the war. Arjuna was inconsistent. Sometimes he was keen on the war; sometimes he shuddered even at the thought. Nakul and Sahadeva were non-committal. Lord Krishna himself was in favour of the war. He knew that when the crop decays and decomposes, it must be burnt and destroyed. This is a very serious subject. Historians have pondered deeply over it and discussed it threadbare. Why couldn't Lord Krishna avoid the war?

Yudhishtira could not avoid the war because he was a party to it. Vidura could not avoid the war because he could not be considered as belonging to either of the two parties in a clear-cut way. Bhishma could not avoid the war because he was not interested in taking sides, but only in preserving the throne for posterity in order to continue the family lineage. That became his tragic weakness. So, why did Krishna himself not avoid the war when Arjuna was hesitating and vacillating between the options? In the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:9) it says:

*Evamuktvaa hrisheekesham gudhaakeshah parantapah
Na yotsya iti govindamuktvaa tooshneem babhoova ha.*

In the middle of the battlefield Arjuna came to a standstill saying, "I shall not fight."

Yet Lord Krishna urged Arjuna to fight, not only by preaching in favour of it, but also by demonstrating his cosmic form and inspiring him to throw himself wholeheartedly into the decisive war. So Arjuna said, *Karishye vachanam tava* – "I shall do your bidding," and thus he was influenced. Historians comment that had the Mahabharata

war not been fought, India could have been spared from ruin and devastation. Maithili Sharan Gupta has pinned down the ruin of the great and glorious India to the Mahabharata war. In his book *Jayadrath Vadh*, the words 'glorious' and 'grand' are used to describe the Indian subcontinent. Today when you visit Europe you describe it with the same adjectives! The Mahabharata war has been held responsible for the total destruction of noble and sublime India. Historians consider the Mahabharata war to be a historical tragedy.

Now what would have happened had the war not been fought at all? Perhaps Duryodhana would have died of cancer or the Kauravas might have negotiated and agreed to give five villages to the Pandavas. The noble gentry would have either abstained from the war or left the country for another land, just as Lord Krishna himself had left Mathura. Like deserters from the battlefield, the fugitive Pandavas would have had to drop out of the war and run away in search of another country to settle in. Then what would have been the fate of the country and what would have been the pros and cons of avoiding the great war? It is a matter for deep speculation. Everybody, including historians, pronounce that due to this war India regressed for thousands of years.

Historians point out that on Yudhishtira's side there was no effective power to stop the war. Bhima was determined to fight and was eagerly waiting to kill the enemy. Arjuna was vacillating, but Draupadi was as resolved as Bhima. She wanted the war in order to redeem her honour. It was she who had been disrobed in front of the full court and put to shame by the Kauravas. She was like a wounded serpent hissing and foaming with the passion of vengeance. She and Bhima consistently thought that there was no point in negotiations and peace talks. They both wanted to kill the Kauravas, to bury them alive. Although Lord Krishna tried to avoid the war, he did not do so wholeheartedly. If he had really wanted to avoid the war, he could easily have done so, considering the adroit statesman, the prudent visionary, the

philosopher and thinker that he was! Krishna wanted this war and he voted in its favour.

If you analyze the whole situation, Duryodhana was responsible. But more than Duryodhana, Dhritarashtra was to blame because he was the king. The entire administration, the ministers, the army and the treasury were all under his thumb, but he became weak. Gandhari also had psychological problems. She was a great lady as far as her personal life was concerned. She covered her eyes and lived as a blind woman, but that was her own affair. When it came to matters of state, she was a queen and had certain responsibilities to fulfil. She could see that her son was dangerous and should have been arrested, but this did not happen because Gandhari and Dhritarashtra were weak.

Why did Krishna think that war was not only inevitable but also necessary? Krishna could have avoided the war because he was a very capable person, but from all accounts what I find is that he wanted it. What made him think that this war was inevitable, necessary and must be fought? There was adharma, but that became commonplace in Indian history after the Mahabharata war. After each foreign invasion, Genghis Khan, Babar, Humayun, Taimur Lang, Nadir Shah, Mohammed Gazni, Sahbuddin Ghori, and the revolutions there was widespread adharma, complete moral degeneration, tyranny and chaos.

In Chittor, sixty-four thousand women committed *johar*, self-immolation, to save their honour from the Muslim invaders and tyrants. Then why only at the time of the Mahabharata did Lord Krishna find war to be necessary? There had been emergencies, crises and catastrophes time and again throughout history. Therefore, adharma cannot be the only root cause of the Mahabharata war. There must have been some other factor which made Krishna see that war as inevitable. What makes war unavoidable? For whom does it become inevitable? Is war necessary for industry to thrive? Is it necessary to eliminate a particular individual? If a war was fought in India today and a few million people

were killed, that would balance the population. So, adharma, the loss of moral values and character, was not the reason for the Mahabharata war.

Lord Krishna expressed his concern and dismay over what happened in Indraprastha. He never showed pleasure over the developments. He did not accept the events at Varanvat, the house of lac. It pained him to see that, because Kunti was from the same family. The Lord could never condone what befell Draupadi or the behaviour of Duryodhana. He could not accept the sufferings that the Pandavas were subjected to by the Kauravas. He was angry and aggrieved at the misdemeanours of the Kauravas. All that is true, yet none of these was the decisive factor that made war inevitable in the eyes of Krishna. These incidents could not be the reason why he gave his vote of consent to the war.

In the narration of the epic, myth must be separated from historical truth, fact from fiction. When you are talking history, you are not talking psychology. In the context of historical enquiry, we will not bring in the cosmic form demonstrated by the Lord. When we acquire that supramental level of consciousness, then we will be qualified to talk about Arjuna's vision. The conspiracy to burn the Pandavas was not the cause of the war either. Such events went on happening and Krishna did not approve of them, but he would not have consented to war for such reasons.

So, historians are still unable to pin down clearly and unequivocally the actual cause of the Mahabharata war. I know the reason but it is a secret which I will not let out. There is a lot of difference between historical fact and folklore. You have to separate the two. Some parts of the Mahabharata epic are not history. The son of Chitrangada is not a historical figure. While going into historical fact, we have to take only the actual and possible events into account. How can you put your finger on that which never could have happened?

Legitimacy and illegitimacy is a social concept. It is not a natural, universal, divine or God-made concept. Every

age decides the relationships. During the Mahabharata period, the social system was such that if a girl gave birth to a child before she was married, the child was considered to be illegitimate. In many countries today, if an unmarried woman gives birth to a child it is not considered illegitimate. It is a child with a single parent. You don't call the child illegitimate, that is an old social concept. In the period of the Mahabharata, Indian society was like that. Even today, if such a child is born in Egypt, Saudi Arabia or Iran, they will call it illegitimate. However, if such a child is born in Australia they will say it has a single parent, because that is their social concept.

During the period of Shakuntala and Vishwamitra, the Indian social system was different again. Vishwamitra was a swami like me, an old man. He fell in love with Menaka, who we can compare to a girl from the West, and they had a daughter called Shakuntala. Menaka abandoned the child because she wanted to go back to England. She said, "I don't want her," and Vishwamitra said, "But I can't keep her because there is no one to look after her. I have no money." So they left the child and Rishi Kanva took charge of her upbringing.

In her youth, Shakuntala fell in love with a very powerful emperor who visited the ashram and their amour resulted in the conception of a child. The emperor returned to his kingdom and she remained with her foster father, Rishi Kanva. When the rishi learned of this affair, he didn't see anything wrong in it. He didn't say, "You have put me to shame, you have disgraced me," or anything of that sort. He said, "Okay my daughter, now you must go to the emperor and tell him to accept you as he promised."

Shakuntala's son was not known as illegitimate, nobody said that. Nowhere in folklore or in history is Bharat called an illegitimate child. This country is called Bharat after that boy whom society would call illegitimate. This is a social concept and such concepts change from country to country, climate to climate and time to time; they are not permanent. So, there is nothing wrong with having a child

before marriage and there is nothing right in having a child after marriage; it is simply a matter of social acceptance.

In Greece and some other countries, if a widow had a private relationship she was taken to a public place and stoned. This happened up to 1970, twenty-five years ago. When I visited Greece, people told me tales about a widow who had a relationship with a man and was publicly stoned to death. The government, the people, the legal and judiciary systems all kept quiet. No one came to her rescue. So these social systems are created by people, be they foolish or wise; you don't know exactly who creates them. In Balakanda of *Ramacharitamanas*, it is said, *Samaratha kahun nahin doshu Gosaaeen; Rabi paavaka surasari kee naaeeen* – “All this is a matter of ever-changing social systems, values and norms of the times and eras.”

Man should adapt his social philosophy and moral codes according to the needs of the time, place and circumstances. For the evolution of society, necessary changes should also be made. These changing social customs should have nothing to do with religion, which is a high spiritual ideal. In modern times, for example, girls have short hair and in olden times they had long hair. In those days long hair and a veil over the face were signs of feminine beauty. These customs are flexible ideals which change according to social values, needs, circumstances and problems. Why don't men grow beards in modern times? Because it is not liked. But a beard is God given and a barber is not. If you ask me, a beard is more natural than a shaved face.

A book has been published on the life of Karna, called *Mrityunjaya*. In that book the author tries to explain the reason for the peculiar and mercurial behaviour of Karna. When a child was born within the traditional social system and its parents were not known or declared, he was considered to be illegitimate. What would the psychological reactions of that child be towards society, the events in his life and the attitudes of others? This book describes exactly what Karna's attitudes were. He would not accept the proposals of Kunti or of Krishna, which would have eliminated

a lot of suffering. Why not? Because of a personality error, and here the words 'rashmi rathi' are used.

Why did Bhima hit unfairly below the knees?

This act was not done according to the rules. It was done in order to kill Duryodhana so that Bhima might win. Certain events took place in the Mahabharata that were acknowledged by Krishna as right, because injustice must be paid back by injustice. *Vishasya vishamaushadham, kantakenaiva kantakam, ushnam ushmena shamyati* – “The remedy for poison is poison, a thorn is removed by another thorn and the problem of heat is treated only with heat.” Krishna told the Pandavas, “All your lives the Kauravas have disgraced you, burning your house down, sending rascals to destroy you. What should you do? There is no dharma for such adversaries. Dharma, moral righteousness and uprightness, should be practised only where the other party shares the same values.”

There are three aspects of social duty. The first is social responsibility, where a social code operates. The second is family responsibility where the family code is predominant. The third is national responsibility where the national code should be followed. Here we are dealing with individual values, what the ideology of an individual should be. Suppose someone abuses you and you retort with more abuse. If you do not keep quiet, the repartee, the tossing of abuse back and forth, continues in an endless chain. In such a situation one should keep quiet and stop the exchange. However, if someone comes to ravage your house and you keep quiet, saying, “It is the nature of a scorpion to sting and the nature of a sage to let him go unharmed,” this is not correct.

The dharma or ethical code should be followed according to the time, place and situation. Do you cut your vegetables with an axe? Do you kill a mosquito with a gun? Generally, in personal matters one should keep quiet instead of retaliating, but in certain situations a person must retaliate. In this context we have misunderstood the teachings of Buddha and Christ. It is written in the Bible,

“If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer him the other. If someone takes your coat, give him your shirt as well.” This has been written, but people do not put it into practice.

It is also written, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”. However, you have to direct your actions and behaviour with reason. ‘An eye for an eye’ does not have to be applied literally; it does not mean that people should go on killing each other. In certain situations you should not try to get an eye for an eye. If someone hurls abuse, you should try to appease, pacify and talk sense into him. Make peace with him, take him to drink Pepsi with you. When two brothers fight, if one brother checks his wife, the quarrel ends and the agreement works. However, in a fight between nations, such as the feud between India and Pakistan, the tension cannot be diffused easily. There has to be patience, diplomacy and restraint. Even if a little control is lost, it leads to a big disaster in which countless people are killed and unlimited destruction occurs. Besides loss of life there is also loss of wealth and foodstuffs.

War solves no problems. In a war nobody should be considered victorious. There is no conqueror; both sides are defeated. The loser most certainly loses, but the winner also loses. There are many factors that should be taken into account when making decisions. The solution is not simple. If someone has done you real harm, it is best to avoid him. The one who harms others definitely gets repaid in the same coin. He has to suffer for his misdeeds in one way or another. However, if someone tries to harm you in a dire way, you have to give serious thought to all the factors before deciding how to counter him. You cannot say, “In the Mahabharata it is written that one should cut the throat of those who do you harm,” and just retaliate blindly.

Why was it that Balaram felt the war was no good and would bring disaster, so he went on a yatra?

Balaram went on a *tirtha yatra*, a pilgrimage, before the war started. He was not invited to join either side because he had already left before Duryodhana came to request that

the kingdom of Dwarika participate in the war. Krishna was not the king of Dwarika. Duryodhana and Arjuna both came to Krishna to request his participation on their side, but first they went to the government of Dwarika. Afterwards they went to invite Krishna because they considered him to be very clever, intelligent and resourceful. In the course of these discussions, Krishna said, "I am not going to fight on either side. I will only drive the chariot. I will not handle any weapon or participate in the war other than driving the chariot." Duryodhana thought, "What is the use of accepting this charioteer? It would be better to have one million armed soldiers." So he chose the army of Dwarika to fight on his side.

Balaram was not actually a part of the whole episode. He was a different kind of man. He drank a lot, he was ever buoyant, ever cheerful. He never became a part of the Mahabharata or of anything Krishna did. Even Krishna had said the war would be disastrous, but he had commitments and Balaram did not. Krishna was committed to certain promises and he disapproved of many things that happened between the Kauravas and the Pandavas.

Why should we call Krishna a god? Did he have a personality that was not affected by the war?

Let's not call him a god at this point. For the time being we are talking about the Krishna who participated in the Mahabharata war. Whether we consider Krishna a god is a personal feeling, not a historical feeling, but the question is a historical question. The historical Krishna was not the divine Krishna. However, he did have a personality that was not affected by anything he experienced. He watched life as if it were a cricket match.

Krishna had a great romance with Radha, yet when he left Mathura he did not even remember her. Mathura and Hastinapur were very close and he often went to Hastinapur. If I had been in his place, I would have returned to Mathura at least once, but Krishna never went to Mathura and never visited Vrindavan again. Once Radha came with the gopis

and herdsmen to see Krishna and they met in Kurukshetra, but the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* tells us they had become very old by that time. Krishna must have been older than me and Radha must have lost all her teeth.

Actually, when the Mahabharata war took place, Yudhishtira was ninety-five years old and Krishna must have been a hundred and twenty-five. All the dates are given. We may wonder how they could have fought such a great battle at their ages. However, the people of a few thousand years ago were very strong. Their genetic constitution was different. Why go back even that far? In the museum in Chittor I saw the helmet of Maharana Pratap, who lived only about four centuries ago. It was so big you could fit it on the head of an elephant! He was about twelve or thirteen feet tall. Such a huge man existed only about four hundred years ago, and what about the horse he rode? As the Kali yuga advances we are becoming smaller, weaker and more infirm.

Do you think there will be a world-wide disaster in the future?

It will take a few billion years unless some cosmic disaster takes place. Scientists recently sighted an asteroid close to Earth. If it destroys California, Tasmania or the coast of India, civilization might end. Such things can happen but otherwise the disaster is yet to come. So don't worry, you won't have to face it.

Satsang 14

December 13, 1996, Midday

All of you, including the people of Rikhia panchayat, should remember that the bridegroom's procession for Lord Rama's marriage will arrive here at exactly ten o'clock on 15th December. The village women are coming to sing the wedding songs and a musical band is also expected. The *baratis*, those belonging to the bridegroom's party, can come with full stomachs as they need not fast. We are *baratis* because we belong to the Lord's party. Those who are *saratis*, belonging to the bride's party, should come with empty stomachs. You people from Mithila who belong to Sitaji's side should fast and undertake hard work. You are to give the dowry and I am to take the dowry from you. One who gets married in Mithila also has to receive abuse. The bridegroom's party of *baratis* are fed with rice by the *saratis*. They say that the same number of teeth are broken as the number of grains of rice left on the plate by the eater. Therefore, the visiting *baratis* should beware because this is a tradition of Mithila. A *sarati* is at an advantage; although you do not get food, at least you are saved from abuse.

At Ram Naam Aradhana philosophy does not work. This festive mood is one of the nine *rasas*, the nine humours. Now we are all in a wedding festivity mood. Just now the marriage of *jivatma* and *paramatma*, the individual and universal soul,

is about to take place. The jivatma has been pining for union with the paramatma for such a long time, but they cannot muster the necessary amount of dowry. They think about collecting it but remain bankrupt. Thus the sole purpose of the Ram Naam Aradhana is that the jivatma finds union with paramatma sometime during this festival. If this happens, well and good!

According to the *Ramayana*, the marriage of Sita and Rama has already taken place. But another marriage is imminent. Do not lose hope. The chance of marriage is there even now and you are all single, eligible brides, struggling to arrange for the dowry. Jivatma is the female, and we are all single, unmarried females because we are all jivatmas or individual souls. The dowry has to be paid by the bride's party. The bridegroom just comes dressed up for the occasion and takes away the bride. Someday paramatma will come and take each one of us away and, therefore, this is our chance to get married. But you must pay off the dowry dues. The baratis, the bridegroom's marriage party, will arrive at any moment.

Tulsi – the presiding deity

Every evening I leave this place for about ten minutes to perform pooja of Mother Tulsi, who is the presiding deity of this akhara. Every akhara has its own special deity. The akhara is a special place of sadhana. The name of this akhara is Paramahansa Akhara. On 23rd September 1989, I was standing here at a particular spot along with a few swamis, when a geru-coloured snake, not less than twelve feet in length and about twelve inches thick, came and perambulated around this property and disappeared. At that moment I realized that the spot where this snake had just vanished before our eyes would be the place for my *dhuni*, my sadhana fire.

I ignited my dhuni over there and it is smouldering even now. Then I made a small shrine for Tulsi near the well because Mother Tulsi is the presiding deity of the spiritual and Vedic darshan. Tulsi is worshipped not only in India

but in many places around the world. She is worshipped in Thailand, Indonesia and Greece. In many places she is planted in the front courtyard of the house and worshipped. I chose Tulsi to be the presiding deity for the Akhara because Sri Baidyanath is the civil surgeon and Tulsi is the queen of all medicinal plants. She is the head of all the departments of pharmaceutical flora.

I am putting this in a witty way, but I am speaking from my heart. I thought to myself, what could be the biggest obstacle in my sadhana? I am a man of truthful heart and robust, sturdy body. Once I decide something I am fully committed to it and my determination in anushtana never falters or flags. But interruption can come from physical sickness, like coughs and colds. These are the dharma of the body. Old age and sickness can bring me down from a five star level to a no star level. My age is also an important factor. I chose the path of a penniless sadhaka, leaving behind the life of a rajarishi.

My prayer

Therefore, I asked Tulsi for only one blessing, that of perfect health, so that my self-imposed vow or anushtana would not be interrupted or broken even for a moment. Tulsi listened to and granted my prayer. Everything worked out perfectly and my mantra fructified. For the last seven or eight years I have remained in perfect health. Although the temperature during Panchagni sometimes reached 90 degrees Centigrade, never once did I become dehydrated.

The second prayer that I have is, “God, the scene in the hospital, the presence of doctors and nurses, drips, bed pans and such paraphernalia may befit others, but spare me all this disgrace.” Sadhus and mahatmas should draw their last breath and leave the Earth voluntarily to reach Brahmanda in a jiffy and bid farewell to the world below. I have seen many mahatmas and others who were renowned and revered in the world, but who departed in a very sorry state. I just do not want that kind of death. I do not know what my karma is. I pray to God to let me even go to hell

if my karma demands it, but my death should be dignified, as befitting the status of a sannyasin. Don't you think I am right? I should die like a true sannyasin and I am sure it will be so.

I have even sent a booking for my ticket and each time I get the reply, "All the seats are booked." So there is no reservation made. I cannot go without a reservation, without a visa from that embassy, but the day my visa arrives, the day my ticket is booked, I will gladly depart. I do not like living in this 1923 model. This house has become too old. I want a brand new flat, a brand new car. This is an old Ambassador, sometimes its carburettor has problems or something else conks out. There should be a new car where I can speed up to a hundred miles an hour.

I am telling you this because I have seen many people who take pride in enlisting the services of famous doctors, in getting their angiographs done by renowned specialists and bragging that they go to the best doctors in India or Europe. This kind of sickness or death is not the status symbol of bhaktas and yoga sadhakas. It is the status symbol of egoists, who are ignorant and who are atheists. Let them die on a hospital bed, let them soil their bed with faeces, let them urinate anywhere, but it is not for me.

No Sunday face

One more thing I wish is that I should have none of my disciples around. When the sadhu or guru dies, the disciple cries. I simply do not understand this. If the son or the mother dies, crying is understandable. Grandchildren mourning the death of their grandparents is also acceptable because in these relationships there is attachment. There are problems of insurance, fixed deposits, security bonds and so on. But when I die I pose no such problem for anybody. I leave no inheritance; I am penniless. I cannot hide even two rupees in my loincloth.

I cannot understand disciples pulling a Sunday face when the guru dies. Do you know what 'Sunday face' means? It means a poker face, a serious face, on which there is no

smile, no life. It is a fixated, long face. How can you be so serious with God? God Himself is so full of laughter, joy and mirth. He is the lover of *lila*, divine sport. God played his divine game in the guise of Lord Rama. In the guise of Lord Krishna He played so many tricks that even today people remember and imitate them. I've seen disciples putting on a Sunday face for eleven days, submerging themselves in mourning. When the guru dies, it is only the death of his body. His soul is alive, his prana is not dead. You only mouth this but it is what we preach daily.

Once there was a mahatma who always exhorted his disciples to keep smiling and laughing. When he died, his disciples put crackers in his clothes. When the dead body was cremated, the crackers burst making a loud sound, which made everyone burst into laughter. Thus, when the guru died the disciples were laughing instead of crying. Even if a son laughs when his father dies, thinking of it as good riddance, what is wrong with that?

Is the marriage of Rama and Sita part of the Ram Naam Aradhana festival? If so, what bhava or rasa does it express, madhurya or prema bhava, divine romance or celestial love?

Marriage means romance and love. Even if philosophically, you take Rama and Sita's marriage as a symbol of the union of jivatma and paramatma, or consider it like any worldly marriage, as most people would, the *madhurya bhava* is very much present. Divine eroticism is definitely represented. The Upanishads also tell us that the union of the jivatma and paramatma expresses bliss, and bliss is a rasa.

In the past my intellect was distorted. I used to think that the jivatma had gone to unite with the paramatma, that the ten heads of Ravana symbolized the sense organs, his twenty hands represented the *vruttis*, the mental fluctuations, and his navel was the lotus centre of desires, *vasanas*. I interpreted, taught and wrote in this way, but today the Lord appears to me as He appears to ordinary folk. He is the one who was born in Ayodhya.

Lord Rama has been defined in various ways. One Rama is the son of Dasharatha, one Rama is the indweller of all beings, one Rama has created this world, and one Rama is different from all these aspects. I am not concerned with the three forms of Rama as they are very difficult for me to think about. I find them impractical and too intellectual. I like the first Rama. I close my eyes and see Him as the blue-limbed, dusky-complexioned, soft-bodied Lord.

My story is very strange. I have been a devotee of Sri Rama from childhood. Born into the Ikshvaku family line, I inherited everything of the Suryavansha, the lineage of the sun. Therefore, I keep all the symbols, the heirlooms of the family. I am a *shastradhaari* as well as a *shaastradhari*, I carry weapons with me as well as the holy scriptures in my memory. That is why, when my guru gave me the mantra *Om Namah Shivaya*, I was in a fix. I asked him, "How do I reconcile the two Lords?" My guru said, "Never mind, meditate on Rama and chant the mantra of Shiva." I obey his command; I play a double role. Inside I am with Sri Rama and my mouth chants Shiva's mantra. There is no difference. The best part is that when I meditate on Sri Rama, Lord Shiva is highly pleased. When I say, "*Om Namah Shivaya*," Sri Rama becomes very happy. Thus Sri Rama is happy and Lord Shiva, too, is happy. I behold joy, I get sweets in both hands.

My guru was a Vedantin, *Aham Brahmasmi*. He lived in a small room, ten by ten. He did not belong to the five star culture; he had an ordinary lifestyle. He kept a photo of Sri Krishna posing as Vitthala, which was printed in Bombay. There was a bell in front of the photo. He would prostrate in front of the picture in the morning. In those days I had an Arya Samaj background. When I saw him prostrating before the picture of God, I used to wonder what it meant. Was it blind naivety or a facade? But my guru was a very good and sincere man. His devotion was genuine and nobody could call him a hypocrite. From his lifestyle and interactions with people I knew him to be a childlike, innocent man. Just as you tell children that there is a man in the moon and they

instantly believe it without doubt, one who lives with God also has a childlike quality.

Intellectuals should not go near God. Aurobindo said, “Intellect was the helper, intellect is the barrier, transcend intellect. Reason was the helper, reason is the barrier, transcend reason.” Aurobindo has written that reason is a big impediment on the path to God. Therefore, my Rama is the son of King Dasharatha. I keep Sri Rama in front of my eyes. My Sita is the Sita of Sitamarhi, found in the fields of Mithila when it was being ploughed.

The simple truth that I want to point out is that the path of catching God, of experiencing, remembering and submerging oneself in God, of melting your mind in God, is the one and only path. Take the easiest and simplest path. Don’t bother about the hard one, don’t take the path of the razor’s edge. The claim that the easy and simple path is very long is correct. Sometimes it will also take you over mountainous terrain. The other path may be short while the easy path makes you walk on and on. It is the path of the ant; like the ant you go on walking slowly but steadily. In 1947, my guru asked me to wait for forty more years. He said, “Your time is yet to come. You have many karmas to finish.” So I started walking slowly and steadily.

Therefore, Sita’s marriage is definitely like the common marriage that we are familiar with. However, the marriage did not take place between two ordinary human beings. This couple were divinities who incarnated in human form to perform the lila. Rama was not an ordinary human like us. His divine qualities are expressed in the following verse of *Sri Nama Ramayanam*:

*Shuddha Brahma paraatpara Raama,
Kaalaatmaka parameshwara Raama,
Sheshatalpa sukhanidrita Raama,
Brahmadyamara prarthita Raama,
Chandrakiranakula mandana Raama,
Srimad Dasharatha nandana Raama,
Kaushalya sukhavardhana Raama.*

He was Rama, the *parabrahman*, the immaculate, pure parameshwara. He was Rama, the *kala atma*, the universal soul. He was Rama the Supreme Being. He was Rama reclining on the bed of the serpent king. He was Rama worshipped by the gods, including Brahma. He was Rama bathed in moonlight. He was Rama, the son of Dasharatha and Kaushalya, the treasure of ascending bliss for them.

Thus Rama was divinity descended to Earth in human form. You should see him as the hero depicted in the *Ramacharitamanas*. Just grasp him simply with a pure and open heart. Do not bother too much about symbolism and its interpretation. Do not hanker too much to understand him intellectually, because the more you do the deeper you will sink into confusion. I am telling you this from my own experience. It is good to listen to stories about God and to talk about Him because His stories inspire us. But when you come to sadhana then you should be naive and simple like a child. You should have the heart of a child, pure and uncomplicated. You should have the feelings of a child towards God.

The marriage of Lord Rama and Sita on the 15th of December should be accepted without too much thought. Do not think that God is omniscient and marriage symbolizes the marriage of jivatma and paramatma and so on. You should not do that. Bhagavan Shiva is my ishta devata and I do want to lure him here. Shiva was present when Lord Rama was born. When Lord Rama married, again Shiva made a point of being there. So, on the 15th, when the wedding is taking place, there is every possibility of Shiva coming down in our midst. If that happens then the purpose of the celestial marriage will most certainly be achieved. The marriage is bait to attract Lord Shiva.

I wonder if I should use the word 'bait'? But I will go ahead and say it so that you can understand what I mean. It is true that Shiva did attend the marriage of Sri Rama along with his retinue of gods and goddesses in the past, and if he comes again to attend the wedding here on the 15th, even if you do not recognize him it doesn't matter. Even if

you cannot see him it won't matter because once he comes down he will definitely leave behind a trail of his fragrant blessings. This is a certainty. We may not recognize him as we are all blind. The Lord is very much present here, but we have cataracts in our eyes and nobody wants to undergo an operation. In fact, there is no one to perform the operation either.

Therefore, I have been sitting here these last six or seven years, waiting to undergo the operation. In *Balakanda of Ramacharitamanas* it is said, *Gurupada raja mridu manjula anjana; Nayana amia driga dosha vibhanjana* – “Nearness to the guru's feet removes ignorance and provides wisdom.” A cataract is an error in perception. Now the cataract is being removed and there is some restoration of vision. Although blurry, at least some vision is there. It does not matter if I see a blurred vision of Shankarji. If he gives a radiant darshan that, too, is most welcome. If he is seen as a spark or as a light, that is all right. If he appears like Varuna, still it is welcome. Any form is welcome, as God does not appear in one particular form. My Lord you have no form, but for my meditation I worship you with form.

So that is why I am asking one and all to come that day and be a guest in the wedding party. Do not bring fruit and flowers for Sita. Does one give fruit and flowers for a dowry? Bring saris, clothes, ornaments, jewellery, cosmetics, the sixteen aids for beauty. Do not make the mistake of bringing sweets. How can a bride carry sweets to her husband's house?

What is the arrangement for food and prasad brought by the bhaktas?

Marriage is a samskara, just like birth and *naamkaran*, the naming ceremony. It is not a Satyanarayana pooja where *batasha*, sweets, are distributed. Sita will go to her in-law's house. All the houses in and around this place are her husband's houses. All the gifts will go to Ayodhya and will reach her husband's houses. One day a big acharya came here, a wealthy person. She presented something to Swami Satsangi, saying that it was a gift for my personal use. So, I

told her, “Tomorrow morning buy five hundred saris, five hundred dhotis which brahmins can wear, five hundred pairs of jeans for our heroes – this is my personal need. Bring in cows, handcarts, spades, sewing machines – all these are my personal needs.”

What personal need do I have? I wear a *langoti*, a loincloth, as a courtesy to you; I don’t need it. I waste time washing it every day. A sannyasin wears a langoti for the sake of society, to observe a social norm. But where is the need? Even you do not need clothes. You don’t wear clothes to look beautiful. It is just your way of thinking. You think you wear clothes to look beautiful, but it is a false idea. Clothes are worn to observe social courtesies and respectability. What would happen if you all walked around naked? Savages in the jungle do that.

When Shankarji’s marriage party arrived, it included bhootas and pisachas, ghosts and apparitions, and even sannyasins. Can these be allowed in the marriage party of Sri Rama?

Sannyasins have their respective norms. In society there are respective norms for all kinds of people. We sannyasins should also abide by those social codes that are applicable to us. We are not all that orthodox, but we do know the proprieties and customs of marriage. I myself never got married. I do not know all that needs to be done to celebrate a marriage in the proper manner. The celebration of marriage should be left to those people who are married or who have had others married. If you go to a marriage celebration and preach kundalini yoga, everything will flop. It is not the place for asana, pranayama and yoga.

There are certain rules which sannyasins have to observe. They should not attend weddings and funerals. These restrictions were imposed for social and psychological reasons, according to the shastras. We must respect the shastras to some extent. The shastras may not be totally right, but they are not totally wrong either! So no sannyasins should be present at the wedding. Those who are married

or have had their sons and daughters married off will help. They will bring Sitaji to the wedding pandal, ringing bells and blowing conches. Women will also be coming from the neighbouring villages.

No one except sannyasins will wear geru. This is a clear instruction. It is very difficult to explain all this to the foreigners. Their faces strike a 'why' expression at every point. I do not have the answer to their 'whys'. Those people who are not proper sannyasins should wear their own civilian dress which is appropriate for a marriage celebration; they should not wear the geru uniform. Geru and yellow are very superior colours, so are white and black. These colours are very significant, but one must take into account the time, place and occasion and dress with propriety. Ladies should wear Benares saris and Sita should also be draped in a grand sari.

What is your relationship with Sri Rama and Sita?

I have a very simple and straightforward relationship with Sri Rama. He is my master. He is the boss and I am his servant. This relationship is already determined between us. Therefore, Sita now becomes my lady boss. She is the mistress, so I do not call her my mother or sister, and I do not consider her a devi. She will order me around, she will command me, "Satyananda, go clean this glass quickly. Your master has come. Bring him milk." I will respond, "Yes, madam," to her command. This has been my servile and obedient attitude in doing everything in their name. I am neither her father nor her mother, nor am I a fraction of their essence.

Hanuman spelled it out thus in *Adhyatma Ramayana*:

On the basis of the physical relationship,

I am your slave.

From the point of view of the individual soul,

I am your friend and a part of you.

In the transcendental relationship

I am one with you.

But I am yet to rise above *jiva buddhi*, the individual mind. *Atma buddhi*, supreme knowledge, has not yet arisen. When it arises I will say so, but not now. At present I am still at the physical relationship level.

Therefore, the sannyasins should have no role to play in the wedding ceremony. The whole department will be delegated to the householders of the villages around here. They will perform the marriage, sit here and sing the marriage folk songs and play the marriage band. The sannyasins' duty is just to run errands, to obey orders and to meet the needs of the ceremony. If they say, "Bring the bangles, bring the saris, bring the wedding gifts," you should carry out those orders and then leave them alone.

I am the servant here who will put things together. I will get the articles listed, but no one should bring oranges, sweets and chocolates! All these are good to offer but not for today's occasion. Sita cannot be sent away to her husband's house with these gifts. This is a definite rule to be followed by all. Some visitors have come here unprepared for the wedding. They want to give something, so they ask if they can give the ornaments they are wearing themselves. They can give them and we will have them cleaned. We have a girl here who knows how to work on jewellery and she will clean it so it looks brand new.

This 15th December celebration, which is on the fifth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Marga Shirsha, is in order to feel the presence of Shiva in any form, whether nirakara or sakara. It is not for us to decide if God is formless or with form; we cannot decide that. All those who are poorna sannyasins, who have had that initiation, will be in *geru*. All others will be in colourful and grand attire as befitting a wedding. Those who conduct the marriage function will have to be non-sannyasins, the ladies of the village and the men of the town. Sannyasins will remain aloof from marriage.

The tradition is that the girl has the right to receive a gift from all those who attend her marriage. This is one of the best forms of marriage anywhere in the world. Nowhere

in history has any race or tribe followed this very delicate philosophy of marriage. I do not interpret this marriage as the union of jivatma and paramatma. I consider that interpretation too extravagant and abstract, too intellectual and one which cannot be experienced. For me, there is nothing to experience because my relationship is fixed. I am his servant, he is my master; therefore, she is my master and I am her servant. When you bring a gift, I will accept it as her servant, and the gift will go with her to Ayodhya. And where is Ayodhya? Ayodhya is all around me. Wherever Sri Rama goes, wherever Sita is, that is Ayodhya.

Satsang 15

December 13, 1996, Midday

Can children be raised properly by one parent?

There are different views about this. However, from all I have read in modern psychology and the ancient theories of India, I think that if a child has a mother and no father he won't miss much, but if a child has a father and no mother he will miss the most. In Asia particularly, a child is with the mother most of the time. The father has to go out and do his job, business, farming or whatever, so the child is always with the mother. Most Indian children sleep with their mother at least up to the age of seven years. Whatever problems they have in school, with their friends or in their personal life, they take to their mother; they don't tell their father. If a child fails his exams, he will tell his mother and not his father. A child seldom lies to his mother, but tells clear lies to his father.

So, from all accounts, experiments and investigations, I have concluded that the mother is the most important parent. When I went to Australia I saw the trend towards one parent families and I thought about whether this was right or wrong for society. In the future, two hundred years from now, what will be the outcome of a matriarchal society? In Indian society the son always carries the mother's name, for example, the son of Kaushalya, the son of Devaki. They

also say the lady's name first, as in Sita-Rama; they never say Rama-Sita. They say Lakshmi-Narayana or Radhe-Shyam, never Narayana-Lakshmi or Shyam-Radhe.

Therefore, I think a child only needs a mother, but a mother needs a man for personal reasons, to earn a living, for security and social status. Within society there are terrorists and other bad elements, so a man is a security guard. A mother may need a man for these reasons, but otherwise she does not need a father for the child. It is enough to tell a child that he has a father, but even that is not necessary. I know many children who have grown up without knowing their father. They are quite normal and do very well. They come to the ashram and are very intelligent, quite balanced and secure, and don't need a man known as their father. So it is the mother who is most important in a child's life.

Another significant aspect in the upbringing of a child is the *samskara*, the basic seed, within an individual. The mother can nurse that seed until the child is seven years of age. That is the child's first education, when you develop the nature which he has brought with him, his genetic personality or genetic seed. After seven years comes the formal education, when you develop his intellect. So during the first seven years it is better that a child lives with his mother, not his father, because in the life of a small child, the father is an outsider. Then, after seven, the formal, intellectual education begins, which means the *gurukul* or school education.

Modern psychology also says that a child's real education ends at seven years and after that he doesn't really learn anything. I can explain it in a different way. I have a dog. His teacher told me that whatever you want to teach this dog, teach him before this period because all his associations, his eating, sleeping and barking habits are learned in a particular period. He will not register anything after that. So, if he does anything wrong, you will have to say no, loud and strong. Only then will he think, "What is this man saying no for?"

The same applies to man as well as to any domesticated animal. Maybe there is even a period of learning for serpents, like cobras. Of course, their life span is different. Humans live for one hundred years and dogs for twelve to fifteen years. Bhole is seven years old now according to our calculations, but in a dog's life he is going to celebrate his golden jubilee. When a man is fifty he celebrates his golden jubilee, but for a dog it comes when he is seven.

So after the age of seven, the training related to the human personality comes to an end. Up to seven years your child learns at the level of samskara, not just through intellect. But you cannot inculcate samskara after the age of seven. The natural computer stops at the age of seven, just as modern computers stop after a certain time. Therefore, it is good for the mother to have a man, but for the child a father is more of a hindrance than a help. The father may be necessary for the mother, but the mother is necessary for the child. This is my ultimate conclusion.

All fathers must know that their role and responsibility to the child is very limited. Fathers are just the wage earners. They earn the money and feed the family. However, the mother's role is very important and in this context she should be accomplished. It is not necessary that she become a doctor, lawyer or professor, although it is good if she does. But it is important that she is cultured, accomplished and well informed. A mother has to have all the qualities of a guru, a teacher. If the family has sufficient money, the mother should not have to work outside. Why should she take a job when she has work at home?

People go out and work because they want money. However, if the family does not need money, the mother shouldn't work because the duty to her children is more important. I am not against women working outside, rather I always tell them to get out of their homes and into the public arena. I am in favour of social exposure. I feel it is very important for women to associate themselves with every strata of society. Even if money is not necessary, it is necessary for women to be accomplished so that they

know how to develop a child's instincts. After all, Shiva was the child of a mother, Maharana Pratap was the child of a mother, Vivekananda was the child of a mother. So, in the life of an infant or a child, it is the mother who is the most important factor.

Why is there social degeneration today? Because mothers are totally out of gear; they are all deranged. They get angry and beat their child. If their husband drinks a little they get worried and anxious. They don't know how to handle their husbands, children, mother-in-law and so on. Women are not able to handle the family because what they are taught in schools is totally useless. For example, when did Akbar die? How does Akbar relate to family life? Ashoka invaded Kalinga. So what! The needs of a mother, at least in India, are totally different as far as education is concerned. After marriage girls have to enter the kitchen and cook. What have they learned at school? Just historical facts, that so and so was born in such a year and died in such a year. And if they fail in history they fail the exam, in spite of all this detailed study.

In the Indian context, female and male education should be entirely different. Females have to know about first aid or how to clean a tablecloth when something spills on it, but they don't learn these things in school. In Europe there are private finishing schools where girls are taught family culture. These schools teach how to dress for summer or winter, what kind of shampoo or oil to use, how to treat tolerable and intolerable guests, how to behave with your mother-in-law or sister-in-law. In India these lessons are found in the shastras, but now the culture is such that people do not want to read them.

In early Vedic times, India was totally matriarchal and the child was named after the mother. Later, during the *Ramayana* and Mahabharata periods, both the father's and mother's names came into use; for example, Dasharatha nandan and Kaushalya nandan, Kunti putra and Pandu putra. So it is evident that once upon a time India was matriarchal. Even now matriarchal societies exist in the

Northeast: Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal. If you go to a shop in Nepal, you will find the women selling the wares. In Mizoram the men play cards while the women conduct business in the shops.

In Australia, the tradition was that a woman took her husband's name after marriage, but nowadays many women keep their maiden name. What effect does that have on marital life?

It is a matter of status. If a woman is a famous writer, singer, actress, diplomat or intellectual, she has to keep her original name. Otherwise, if she gets married to somebody called Thomson, she will have to be introduced in public as Mrs Thomson when she is already known in public by her own name. So for career ladies it may be better not to go by their husband's name. It is the same in India. When a girl is married into a family she automatically assumes that family name and loses her original name, but I feel this custom is not right. It is not a just or humane idea.

Men and women are different entities in the realm of nature and they have their own spiritual destiny. She has her own destiny and he has his. She is bound by her karma and he is bound by his. Since she is bound by her karma and he by his, there is no reason why a woman should take her husband's name. If society says it should be done for the sake of the progeny, then why shouldn't the husband take the woman's name? If Sarita Sinha's husband is Subhash Verma, then he becomes Subhash Sinha. Why not? However, if the husband is a man of achievement, a great lawyer, solicitor, poet or actor, then it is good for the woman to become Mrs Verma.

In time many things will change. Society is a flowing river, a changing process, not a static object. Society today has certain norms and if you are tired of them, you can change it. Then another form of society will develop and again you can change it. Fashions change and then come back again and, in the same way, society changes and comes back again.

In Singapore it is the law that a girl can decide if she wants to take her husband's name or not.

There may be a law that says she is free to do this, but these things are done for legal purposes. For example, Mr Verma has a wife from Mr Sinha's family. She becomes Mrs Verma and is the legal partner or heir to her husband's property. However, if she retains her maiden name, then legal problems arise. How can it be proved that she is his wife, because after marriage she remained Bimla Sinha and he remains Mr Verma. Now it is very difficult to correlate the relationship between the two unless there are substantial witnesses, and you have to be able to produce the witnesses.

In a traditional Indian marriage there are five witnesses: the brahmin who conducts the ceremony, the brahmin who conducts the havan, the barber, and two more who preside over the function. Legal problems arise if these witnesses are not available because people can say, "Why didn't she change her name?" Someone replies, "It is not compulsory." Then they may say, "Ah, but it is compulsory. She may retain her own name for her own reasons, but for legal purposes she should be known as Mrs Verma, Mr Verma's wife, then she becomes the sole heir to his property."

So the point is, when a girl is born will she be known as Sinha or Verma? If a boy is born, will he be Verma or Sinha? We get into complications. Either she becomes Verma or he becomes Sinha. Then the problem continues into the second, third, fourth and fifth generations. Therefore, in order to maintain social cohesion these laws and traditions are created. But celebrated personalities should retain their own names, otherwise it creates great confusion in history.

In Australia, Swami Niranjan was advising mothers to train the child in the womb by playing a cassette. How is this possible?

There is a story of the great bhakta Prahlad, who was the son of a treacherous and demonical father. Prahlad's father was a very powerful emperor and an out-and-out atheist. He used to tell his subjects, "I am everything, so don't

worship any other God.” When Prahlad was in the womb, a great sage, Rishi Narada, came and initiated the wife of that emperor into the mantra of Narayana. So that was the first samskara which was passed on to Prahlad. While in his mother’s womb, Prahlad was exposed to such vibrations that he imbibed a spiritual nature within himself. In the same way, a child can be educated in the embryo state through psychic injection which is imbibed through the mind and ears.

When Prahlad was growing up he challenged his father who became very angry and tried to destroy him. Prahlad was continually harassed by his father, who did everything possible that a cruel emperor would when his own son was challenging his position. Ultimately, however, the son was victorious and the father lost the trophy. This beautiful and moving story is found in the Srimad Bhagavat and it shows that a child can be taught in the womb.

It is not necessary to play a tape. The unborn child will be influenced even if you attend satsang and try to keep good company. It will have the same effect. If you want to make your child an expert at sports, expose the mother to that. If you want your child to become a musician, politician, thief or murderer, expose the mother to that influence. A tape should be used only if this situation is not possible.

How can fearlessness be developed?

Do not be afraid of anyone. One who is frightened is constantly plagued by fear. People lock the doors at night and then sleep. Why do they do this? What are they afraid of when the walls are built up so high all around the house? They are scared even when there is nothing to lose. But there are many other reasons for fear as well, such as death and disrepute.

Right from childhood I was never afraid of anything. There were thick forests where I lived and I used to walk straight into them. I was fond of hunting and even at the age of eight I used to go on hunting expeditions. I used to walk through the forest in the dark. I had the desire to

kill a tiger and was never afraid of death. What is there in death? Everyone has to die one day. I did not agree with the philosophy of fear. I think that a man's samskara is imprinted on him from birth itself. When I was born, a gun was brought for me to touch, not a mala. I was given wine to drink, not honey.

When parents give certain samskaras to a child, he is bound to develop along these lines. It is because of this background in my childhood that people call me names and spread rumours about me, but I am not the least bothered. Let people talk. How long will they do so – for ten, twenty, thirty years? Those who are spreading lies about me will leave this world one day and be forgotten, but those who are writing my true life story will see that it survives the ravages of time and will be remembered. I think like this.

Science tells us that nobody dies of hunger. People die of overeating, not hunger. The death rate is higher among the eaters than among the starved. In the Jain religion you are told not to drink milk. I lived on milk for many days and nothing happened to me. Once in Swami Sivananda's ashram I decided to fast for forty days and take only fresh limewater, but my vow was broken on the occasion of Swami Sivananda's birthday. For prasad distribution, *boondi laddoos*, a type of sweet, were brought from the local market and stored in a room. I was made the in-charge of that room. In the beginning I helped myself to a little bit of boondi, then I took another helping, and thus my fast was broken. But I never thought that one would die of starvation.

Fearlessness has to be imparted by parents as a samskara during childhood. The mother plays a crucial role in this area. Many mothers threaten their child, saying, "Keep quiet or I'll beat you. Stop crying or I won't give you any food to eat." When the child does not stop crying, the mother says, "I will go and tell your father." Such threats should not be uttered to a child. Children are bound to be naughty. If they do not make mischief in your presence, they will do so behind your back. You should never give any suggestion

which will create fear in the child's mind. If the child jumps from the wall, what will happen? He will die. So what? Death is not such a big thing.

Being born is a big thing. To take birth there has to be a long preparation. There is no problem in dying. People are so scared of death. I do not understand this fear. The body is a decrepit flat, seventy years old, parts of which are wobbling and falling apart. There is heat, there is cold, the window is coming apart, white ants are eating into the wood. You go on living in the same flat and cannot even move around properly. You cannot eat, you cannot drink, you cannot throw out the wastes from the body. Won't you think, let me die quickly so I can get a new model in the next birth?

If you die today, you will be born next year; it is only a matter of one year. After that, you will get a good birth in which you will have a loving, caring mother who will feed you well. As you grow up everything will be available. You will go to school and college, play football, hockey, badminton and tennis. Now this old body can play nothing. Why should I keep this 1923 model which can do nothing? Fear of death is the root of all fear. Man is afraid of death. Desire for food, sleep and progeny are the first three instincts. Fear of death is the fourth.

The feeling of insecurity is deeply ingrained. Parents, especially the mother, play a vital role in imparting samskaras to the child. I do not give any importance to the father's role, which I consider to be only social, but the role of the mother is crucial and deeply significant. If the gurudom of the mother falters, the discipleship of the child gets shaky. The mother is the first and foremost teacher, but the mother may put many false ideas and beliefs into the child. I will tell you about my own childhood events in this connection.

Near where we lived there was a bamboo structure and it was widely believed that a ghost lived there at night. As I grew up I began to wonder about the truth of that belief and sometimes I was inclined to believe it. At first I

hesitated to pass by there, but then I purposely decided to take that road and started going that way. I asked my family members about it. My father was an Arya Samaji and my mother an orthodox Sanatani. The union between Arya Samaj and orthodoxy leads to the development of common sense, because neither Arya Samaj nor orthodoxy have any common sense.

My father used to tell me that there was an ulterior motive in creating this kind of fear in people. He said that there was no need to be frightened and I could easily pass by on that road. He also suggested that I take a torch with me. My father explained, "There are rascals who spread such fear of ghosts in order to isolate a certain area. Then, after committing thefts in crowded areas, they use that lonely place as a hideout because they are sure that nobody would dare to go to that supposedly haunted place to catch them." My father was in the Police Department and he knew the ways of criminals. He was also influenced by the ideas of Arya Samaj, which stood against superstition and blind belief, even though the Arya Samajis themselves were not completely free of such false convictions.

I think that when fear is completely uprooted we can get rid of the limitations of the personality, and in this way social limitations will also come to an end. For example, if there is no brake in a car it makes no difference as long as we can manage with the clutch and the accelerator. But suddenly when the need to apply the brake arises, then we realize there is a problem because the clutch and the accelerator are of no use. Here fear will come to our rescue. This limiting, natural instinct can also become our saving grace. Food, sleep, sex and fear are the switches that keep the life process under proper control. Just imagine what life would have been like if there had been no need for food or fear? Many problems, organizational complexities and limitations arise because of the need for food! These are the speed breakers on the road.

In the 8,400,000 species of man's evolution these instincts and the consequent limitations are essential for

the development of man. When the heart is purified, the emotions purged, the *antahkarana*, the psyche, deconditioned, then it is right to become fearless. But today your heart is not pure and your mind is not clean. There are people whom you think are your enemies or your friends. If you become fearless at such a stage, it will be very difficult for the people around you. Fear is a necessary instinct. It is the rule of nature; it is nature's defence mechanism working through you.

Fear, sex, sleep and hunger are instincts common to all beings, not only humans. You can find them everywhere. But why should these instincts be there? Why aren't you free? In the process of evolution there are grades, just as in primary school, high school, college and university, and each grade has its own limitations. You can't have a college syllabus in primary school. You can't have an MA syllabus in high school. You can't teach higher mathematics to a child in seventh class. In seventh grade you have to teach that a yard is made up of three feet, a mile is made up of eight furlongs. But when the child goes to a higher grade and starts advanced maths, then inches, feet and yards become irrelevant. At that time you tell him that these are all false, but you do not tell him so in the lower grades.

In the same way, fear disappears on its own. There is no effort needed to eliminate it, but the real necessity is that man becomes self-aware. He must know what he is up to every moment. For example, today I am afraid of slander and criticism. In one of Bhartrihari's slokas it is said, *Bhoge rogabhayam kulechhyutibhayam vitle nripaalaadbhayam* – "The one who enjoys material pleasures will always fear illness and disease." The one from an elite family will always be worried about falling into disgrace and disrepute. When there is too much money there is a constant fear of being trapped in the income tax net. Everything in this world is full of fear.

If you misappropriate any item, the outcome is fear. If you pursue sensual enjoyment, fear of ill health and disease will crop up. If you have a lot of money, fear of taxation will

creep in. If you are famous and enlightened, fear of being denigrated and downgraded will creep in. Everything in the world is governed by fear. There is only one thing that will not lead to fear – *vairagya*, or detachment, is outside fear. The outcome of delusion is fear; the outcome of learning and erudition is fear. All the assets of life give rise to fear, the only exception is *vairagya*. Detachment in life generates fearlessness. Bhartrihari has written this in his *Vairagyashatak*.

How can the tail of a dog be straightened?

A dog's tail can be straightened by tying it up, but the most difficult task in the world is to make the mind straight. A jnani guru can explain this so that you grasp it with your intellect, but that will not make your mind steady. The shastras tell us that there are only two ways to make the mind steady and quiet. One way is by following the practices that your guru prescribes. The second is to curb the useless thought process, the unnecessary thinking. Rebuke yourself thus, "Why are you thinking so much? Isn't it a waste of energy? Do you gain anything from this futile occupation? You are thinking ill of others, but did you get anything out of it?" Thoughts that bring you no benefit are all useless. You must stop thinking about things that have no practical value.

First do the practice prescribed by your guru. You must be very regular, be it fifteen or twenty minutes of practice. Do not do too much. Secondly, thinking over the past is no longer relevant, for example, your father died ten years ago and you are still crying over the loss. This is futile. There are many such worthless things that you have experienced in the past and still cling to like a baby monkey. You are still holding on to that decomposed bundle of flesh. This is called *raga*, or attachment.

Man clings to things that ended ten or twenty years ago and he becomes lost in those useless memories. In the *Yoga Sutras* (1:15), Patanjali has written, *Drishtaanushravika vishayaavitrishnasya vasheekaara sanjnaa vairagya* – "When you have seen, heard and experienced many things but

have no craving for them, then you are a vairagi, you are detached.” This is the simple definition of vairagya. Life, death, sorrow, happiness, deceit, betrayal, distrust and ingratitude are experienced by everybody in life. No one is free of them.

Even the life of Sri Rama was tragic. With great difficulty Sita was restored to him and yet more tragedy awaited him at home. Look at the life of Lord Krishna. From the time of conception in his mother’s womb, he was on Kansa’s hit list. He had to flee to Dwarika like a refugee, leaving a happy home. While talking about God, figurative language is used. But this is the historical truth that Krishna had become a fugitive of war. What happened even after running away from the battlefield? Dwarika itself was ravaged.

When even the heroes, the *mahapurushas*, are put to such suffering, who are we to expect a different fate? They were great men, great heroes, epoch-makers, who had some control over circumstances and situations. But what are we? We have absolutely no control over anything in our lives. My hair has gone grey and I cannot turn it black again without using dye. If those who have some power over circumstances leave things as they are, then why should we fret and frown? Therefore, whatever has happened in the past, let it be dead and gone. Whatever is here in the present is the truth for today. Do not think either of the past or the future.

Man must become an *astika*, a believer in God. Trust God, have faith in God. It means forgetting the past and living in the present. Live in the now, the present. Once my guru told me, “You have gone to the railway station three hours early because the train will not come for three hours. Although you have purchased your ticket and arrived at the station three hours ahead of time, the train will not come rushing in before its arrival time. You may be ready, but the train is not. You will have to wait in the waiting room or you can walk around, read the newspaper, visit the bookstall, have tea or a cigarette and pass the time somehow.” I asked him, “How long will I have to wait?” He replied, “Forty

years.” This happened in 1947 and today it is 1997. Thus fifty years have gone by. It was forty years in 1987.

A person cannot move ahead, cannot become a real disciple, until and unless he has atmic or spiritual maturity. Will you get a seven or eight-year-old girl married off? No, she has to become mature. The same applies in spiritual life. Just as there is physical maturity, there is also spiritual maturity. So I said, “Okay, let me go home then.” He said, “No, no, once you go back, you will get stuck. It is better to work here tirelessly. Do typing, banking, printing, editing, translation, cut vegetables, cook sambar. Do this, do that, work, work and work. Do everything, do all kinds of work for me.”

This was a good device. It was like doing a job without remuneration. This gave me an advantage because work yields good fruit, never bad fruit. Service of guru is *nishkama karma*, selfless work. I grasped this trick and continued it up to 1987. Then I bade goodbye to life and came and sat here. Now I do nothing. This is all His maya.

Satsang 16

December 14, 1996, Morning

Everybody has a characteristic way of thinking. Most people are always unhappy, sulking and cribbing about this or that not happening. This is a kind of sickness within them. What is sickness after all? All illnesses, coughs, colds, stomach ailments and so on, are connected with the way one thinks. Many people become unhappy because of happenings and events which took place two or three years ago or in the remote past. As a result they have a lot of health problems which the doctor can neither diagnose nor treat. Health does not depend on good food and medicine alone. Relief may be obtained from good food and medicine, but nothing more. Our health must be excellent, especially the health of sannyasins, because we have nobody to look after us. We are all dogs of the washer man. We belong neither to the home nor to the washing place, we are neither here nor there.

Idea of Sita Kalyanam

Even I myself do not know how this idea of Sitaji's marriage came to me. I had not thought of it consciously; it just happened and kept on going ahead. The villagers were enthusiastic about it and gave me an injection. I said, "All right, let it go on." The villagers can follow this kind

of program. Vedanta and other things are beyond their understanding. All the people who live in the surrounding areas are class four people. You will rarely find a brahmin, kshatriya or a vaishya. They are all labourers, stone cutters, rickshaw and thela pullers. They are sweepers who sweep the roads, coolies who carry the loads, scavengers who pick up the dead cow from your house. There are some farmers as well.

The villagers understand things that are simple and straightforward. They follow nothing of kundalini yoga, chakras, nirvikalpa and savikalpa samadhi. Even if they understand it, what will they do with the knowledge? You cannot go into samadhi just by understanding the philosophy; it is not an experience that can be had by merely listening to or cultivating that knowledge.

Want and need

If anyone wants to learn about yoga now, let them ask Swami Niranjan. I left yoga long back and have forgotten it. I do not even remember the names of the chakras. Yoga was never my subject. I taught yoga because I was playing the shopkeeper who caters to the demand of the people. What kind of wares will you keep in a shop? Of course, those that sell and are in demand. I myself did not need yoga. It was never any use to me then, nor is it of any use to me now. The anchor of life for a sannyasin is detachment, *anasakti*. A sannyasin has to remain aloof, unattached; he should get involved in nothing. He is an outsider and should remain an outsider.

Asana and pranayama are necessary for householders. Their lifestyle leads to an accumulation of toxins in the body. They always have worries, and worry causes the glands to secrete certain hormones which build up in the body as the individual is ever beset with anxiety. A householder may be engaged in any profession, as an office worker or farmer, self-employed or unemployed, but he lives in a constant state of anxiety. If a family member falls sick, he worries about the recovery. If a baby is born, he is anxious about

its survival. If his wife is pregnant, there is concern about whether it will be a girl or a boy. If a marriage is arranged, there is apprehension that it could be cancelled at the last minute.

Thus the householder's life is fraught with anxiety and worry. Even if he gets what he wants, he is worried about losing it. Due to constant anxiety, too much stress and tension build up in the mind and, therefore, asana, pranayama and meditation are necessary. People in cities live in cramped, congested places. They have coops for flats, with the kitchen and toilet next to each other. There is pollution everywhere. The food, water and air are polluted. The vegetables are toxic because the seeds are treated with chemicals before sowing. Spraying plants has now been replaced by treating the seeds. As a result, illness is everywhere, cancer is widespread.

The need for yoga amongst householders is very great, but sannyasins do not need it so much if they lead the right kind of life. They should keep the doors and windows open so that the living place is well ventilated and well lit. They should also have a daily bath and a daily walk. Eating less and fasting occasionally keep the health intact. If a sannyasin's lifestyle is correct, illness, worry and inauspiciousness will never touch him. There is need and there is want. A sannyasin should be free from wants. In winter a blanket is a need. Thus, if a sannyasin leads life meeting just his needs, his life is happy and good. But if a sannyasin runs after desires for this and that, then his life has the upheavals and unhappiness of a householder's life. He will also be sick and asking for the doctor's help. The noblest ashrama is sannyasa, when a sannyasin lives like a real sannyasin.

A lesson in service

Thirty or forty years ago I was living in Rishikesh at Sivananda Ashram, on the banks of the Ganga. Swargashram was on the opposite bank. I was given a room in the ashram and while living there a peculiar sickness developed. I felt

that I must have the least number of possessions. If there were too many things around me, I would feel agitated and ill at ease. This was not a recent sickness, it had also been with me in the past. In between, for about twenty years my life became a little different. I had a watch on my wrist, a computer in my pocket and I always travelled first class. This was my lifestyle for twenty years, but at Sivananda Ashram the room that I lived in had only the bare necessities. There was only one cot, a blanket and a glass.

One day Swamiji came to my room on his rounds and asked, "Don't you have a proper bed?" I replied, "No, and I don't need one either." He said, "Yes, yes, you must have a bed and at least one extra blanket." I repeated that I did not need them but he insisted that I must keep them, as Rishikesh was a place of pilgrimage where people come and go. A stranger, a sick man, might walk in at any odd time of night. The ashram was a big place where over a hundred people lived. If someone fell sick, he would make do with a glass of warm water as a remedy or a cup of tea for aged visitors. By insisting that I keep some extra things like a blanket and a glass, Swami Sivananda showed a new way, which was rather difficult for me at the time.

The next day he gave me glasses, mattresses, tea leaves and so on. There was an empty almirah in my room and very soon it became so full of things that there was no place to keep even my own blanket. So I placed one mattress on top of the other and then managed to sleep on top of the heap. You see, a sannyasin has to follow this ideal that Swami Sivananda placed before us. Have you ever seen the mango tree eating its own fruit or a rose bush enjoying the scent of its own flowers? When you produce or keep something for others, not for yourself, that is called altruistic service or *paropakar*. It comes from the roots *para* plus *upakar*, meaning good for others, not indulging in selfish pursuits.

Altruistic stress

The sannyasin who thinks least about his or her own self will have no stress and tension. Furthermore, if he becomes

tense and anxious for the sake of others, over the health or poverty of others, it helps him positively. That altruistic stress has a constructive benign influence whereas stress due to selfish concerns has a malign effect. If you lose sleep over the problems of others, it will never cause a heart attack. On the other hand, if you worry about yourself even for a little while, you invite sickness and will have to seek a doctor to give you an injection. Everybody should take note of this point.

In the villages of your area there are always mishaps and calamities overtaking people. Someone's husband gets sick, someone's child is mad, someone's daughter elopes, someone's wife gets widowed, someone's son loses his job or goes to jail, someone's son is a rascal and the daughter is a young girl. If you feel disturbed and distressed for their sake and wonder, "How can I help them when I am so poor?", when you remain awake in bed with thoughts of concern and sympathy for others, it will never lead to high blood pressure; you will never get diabetes. But if you think about your own problems, you will have high blood pressure the very next day.

Always remember that the anxiety and worry which you feel for others will never do you any harm, but if you think about your own problems and become worried then immediately the blood pressure will rise and the sugar level will fluctuate. Thus Swami Sivananda always exhorted us, "Worry and anxiety will not harm you if it is not for your own selfish problems." That is the only condition.

Speciality of Baidyanath

These Italians coming in are returning from the temple. The foreigners who go to the temple are wealthy people. They are not one or two and a half rupee people. They are moneyed and they put five hundred or a thousand rupees in the temple kitty, never a paltry sum. The speciality of this temple is that followers of any religion can easily gain entry, including Muslims. Our Miyaji and his wife Khatoon, a Muslim couple who supply food for my dog Bhole, go to the

temple. When I ask them where they have been, they reply that they have been for Baba's darshan. The priests have not made any rules of exclusion. Anybody can go there. When the abhishek or shringar rituals are on, the door is closed for some time and nobody is allowed in. In the temple in Ujjain, however, women are not allowed in.

Today discrimination is not observed in most temples, but previously, in Vishnu temples there were many restrictions and the caste of visitors to the temple was always scrutinized. In Vrindavan visitors are not allowed to enter the temple wearing coats or jackets; one has to remove one's shirt also. There are many pilgrims visiting pilgrimage centres. In the past there were clashes between Vaishnavas and Shaivas. In the Puranas there are stories based on this theme. Several hundred years ago in Swami Sivananda's family line there was an erudite pundit named Appayya Dikshitar. He was not allowed to enter the Vaishnava temple as he was a Shaiva.

Two great reformers

The animosity existing between Shaivites and Vaishnavites in earlier times was as acute as that between Hindus and Muslims today. Tulsidas was successful in removing this enmity among the common people, while Adi Shankaracharya eliminated it at the intellectual level. He established Narayanji in the Badrinath temple and appointed a Shaiva priest. This tradition continues down to the present day. The temple of Badrinath is Vaishnavite but the priest of the temple is a Shaivite. This is the tradition that Adi Shankaracharya created.

Intellectuals know there is no difference if a Shaivite priest worships a Vaishnava deity, a Muslim priest conducts the pooja at Kashi Vishwanath temple, or a Hindu maulvi conducts namaz in Jama Masjid. This is not happening today, but it should and will happen one day or another. Why should only a Roman Catholic be the Pope? A Hindu or a Muslim could also be the Pope. What harm would there be? He just has to fulfil the regulations, conduct the mass,

interpret the teachings of the Bible and perform all the mudras properly. That's all.

So, Shankara removed sectarian enmity during his period and later Tulsidas surpassed all reformers and peacemakers. He told the people that Shiva himself does japa of Sri Rama and that Rama worships Shiva. How can there be a fight when both the bosses are friends? Why should I fight with the follower of another sect when the bosses themselves are avowed friends? So the clash is no longer there. In India there is no longer any distinction between a Vaishnava and a Shaiva temple. We don't even know that such differences ever existed. We are discussing this now, but generally we are not aware of it at all.

Combined worship

In the Vishwanath temple at my guru's ashram in Rishikesh, there is a shivalingam in the centre. Behind it is a statue of Lord Krishna in black granite. On the right side are Sita and Rama, along with Lakshman and Hanuman on one side and Shatrughna and Bharat on the other. Nandi is also there along with all the devatas. When pooja is performed, the main deity is Shiva. Rudra abhishek is performed in the morning, but before that all the deities are woken up. Then in the early morning, first of all someone cleans the whole temple, removes the old flowers and chants mantras in praise of the deities.

Every morning there is abhishek for Shiva. He is worshipped first, then Krishna. Afterwards the *Purusha Sukta* is read, followed by *Rama Raksha Stotra*. In India we do not have a distinct sanctorum for Shiva, Vishnu or Shakti, although they are three distinct sampradayas, or sects, with three distinct regimentations. Vaishnavites never eat onion or garlic, not to speak of meat or wine, and they don't come into the temple without bathing first. Shaivites say it is good to take a bath, but it isn't essential. If you are an old man, come anyway, Shiva doesn't mind. Shaktas say, bath or no bath is all right as God wants your heart. In their worship they sacrifice a goat and sometimes use wine.

Religious tolerance

Now these three sampradayas: Shaiva, Shakta and Vaishnava, have adjusted with each other in such a way that one does not feel any difference, although it is there. The discrimination between the Shaktas and Vaishnavas is no longer apparent. The Shaktas accept that the Vaishnavas are right, and the Vaishnavas accept that the Shaktas are right in their own way, but no sacrifice is allowed in their temple. In the Shiva temple at Deoghar, a goat is sacrificed every day. There was a lot of hue and cry by the so-called intellectuals who wanted to stop the sacrifice. Finally the case went up to the Supreme Court and a mandate was given that this temple follows the ancient tradition of the *Ganga Samhita* wherein sacrifice is acceptable. So it is an injunction of the Supreme Court!

Whenever worship is performed in any church or mosque, it follows the lines of an ancient tradition. There has to be a basis for the customs of every sect. It is the same with this temple. There was a time when this state was called Santhal Parganas. The original residents are called Santhalis and this tribe lives here today. The Santhalis were the original caretakers of this temple. In the Santhali tradition, as well as in many of the ancient traditions world-wide, sacrifice is acceptable. The Santhalis sacrifice a goat. They have been told by their grandfathers, by their tradition, that sacrifice must be made.

Who are we to say no? What business is it of ours? We are not Santhal, Jewish or Muslim. How dare we say that a Muslim should not make a sacrifice? It would be better to keep our mouths shut. The law says that in a democratic country every tradition of every religion is acceptable. Another's religion is none of my business and none of the state's business. It is not the business of a non-Santhali to say that Santhals should not perform sacrifices. If a Santhal, Muslim or Jew says he will not make a sacrifice that is all right, but others should have no say about it.

So, a goat is sacrificed daily in the temple at Deoghar and the expenses are borne by the State Government for

trying to stop the tradition of sacrifice in the temple. The Supreme Court penalized the government for stopping the sacrifice; that was the Supreme Court's ruling. The government was fined, so here all the costs of the sacrifice are to be borne by the government.

Have you been to Kamarupa in Assam?

I went there and did Devi anushthana before coming to Rikhia. I fasted for nine days and on the last day I went to the temple to worship the deity. I also arranged for *kanya bhojan*, ritual feeding of young girls, to be performed. Last year this was also done here for the Sat Chandi Maha Yajna. It was a beautiful scene. I arranged the feast for the virgins and after that I performed my own pooja. At the temple of Kamarupa they gave us the blood of a pigeon as prasad, because there a pigeon is sacrificed and the goddess is bathed in its blood. This made no difference to me. If you cannot bear to see it then don't do the pooja there, but if you go there to do pooja then you will have to eat the prasad that is distributed.

Kamaksha, Kamarupa, Kamada, Kamakhya and Kamakshi are all names of the goddess. The vaginal part of Sati dropped in Kamakhya, so it is called a *yonipitha*. Deoghar is called a *hridayapitha* because the last part of Sati, which was her heart, fell here. The story goes that while Shiva was carrying Sati's corpse, the different parts of her body fell here and there. Wherever a part fell to the ground, that spot became a *shaktipitha*. At last the upper torso fell at Deoghar and it was here that Sati was cremated. Therefore, this place is called the *chitabhoomi* of Sati, the burning ground of the goddess. This is not the chitabhoomi of Shiva, which is in Varanasi. This is the chitabhoomi of Sati. Here the devotees dance in a frenzy, intoxicated with bhang.

Isn't sacrifice directly opposed to ahimsa?

A puritanical, ascetic streak has entered into our midst due to the influence of the Jain and Buddhist religions. Every religion has a set of samskara karmas which can

be moderated when they become too excessive. You can perform sacrifice if you want, but that does not mean going in for large scale slaughter, involving extensive killing. There is no other form of ritual worship for people except sacrifice. That is why Lord Buddha opposed sacrifice. He has written that his heart melted upon seeing an animal slaughtered. Although sacrifice was authorized by the shrutis, still he criticized it.

So the Buddhists, Jains and Vaishnavas opposed sacrifice. They said, "Sacrifice your inner animal. Why kill this poor goat?" That is their philosophy, which may be correct. But when it comes to the practical social reality, you have no business to stop my method of worship. If I decide to change my practice I can do so, but no one has any right to interfere with my tradition. A Hindu has no right to say a Muslim is wrong. A Muslim has no right to say a Hindu is wrong. A Christian has no right to say a Muslim is wrong. A Hindu has no right to say a Christian is wrong.

No one should encroach on the religion or faith of another. One can accept or reject it, but there should be no criticism. No one has a right to criticize another's religion. This is just common sense. If Christians want to change their religion let them do it; they are free to do so. If I want to change my religion I am free to do so and you should not interfere.

Can you tell us something about the place called Hinglaj?

Hinglaj takes its name from the goddess Hinglaj. It is a pilgrimage centre and I went there a long time ago. Now it is situated somewhere in Afghanistan or Baluchistan. I don't know for sure because my visit took place forty-five or fifty years ago. I don't remember every detail. I must have been about twenty to twenty-five years old then. I went to Hinglaj when it was a part of India, before Pakistan was created. The route started from the Makra hills near Karachi and one had to travel by camel through the desert at night and rest during the day. It took me about eleven days to reach Hinglaj.

There was a well at Hinglaj called Chandrakoopa, in which people put coconuts. Some of the coconuts would float and some would sink to the bottom. That place was also called Bhrunahatya Tirtha in relation to the ancient practice of abortion. *Bhrunahatya* means killing of the foetus. So Bhrunahatya Tirtha was a pilgrimage centre for those who have killed a child in the womb. In ancient times abortion was an unacceptable practice and so people would go there to do penance. A short distance away there was a math of Adi Shankaracharya, founder of the Dashnami sannyasa tradition. It was an ordinary math, like any other in India, where sadhus lived.

The strange thing about Hinglaj was that, although it was a Hindu place of pilgrimage, the priest of Chandrakoopa was Muslim. It was he who accepted the dakshina and conducted the pooja. He was known as Chari Sahib. It was the custom there to give a coconut to the priest who was Muslim. People here don't know about this at all. The Muslim priest accepts a coconut at a Hindu place of pilgrimage in Afghanistan or Baluchistan where coconut is never propagated. Coconut is not grown in the north. It is cultivated in the coastal areas of Bengal, Orissa, Kerala and Madras. Then how did the custom of offering coconuts get to the northern parts? This is how you can study the extent of religion. Coconut is offered in Baluchistan where coconuts do not grow. It means there is an ancient relationship between Baluchistan and a coconut producing country.

The priest at Hinglaj said to me, "Throw your coconut in the well." I replied, "But I have caused no abortion, so why should I?" He said, "Just do it." So I threw the coconut into the well, but it was not accepted because it did not sink. It remained on the surface of the water, like a rotten coconut that has holes in the shell. Sometimes the coconuts float and sometimes they sink. My coconut floated so the priest said, "The goddess has not forgiven your sin." I said, "I don't care because I do not need forgiveness as I have not committed any sin." After Hinglaj we went to the Dashnami monastery,

stayed there comfortably for two or three days and then returned.

So that is my experience of Hinglaj Tirtha, which is now in Baluchistan. I thought I would visit it once again, but now it is very difficult to go there because the relations between our countries are not cordial. Actually I like to travel so I never stayed in Munger for too long. I did not build the Munger ashram. I just used to hand over the money and let others look after the construction and other affairs. I like to visit new places. If I heard that there was an interesting library somewhere, I would go and visit it.

I heard that people go all the way to Norway to watch the midnight sun, so I went there. People travel to Norway with their cameras to photograph it. The sun rises here and sets there at midnight. During my travels I journeyed by elephant, horse, rail and on foot. I even went to Rangoon in Mandalay. At that time I was young and could travel. Now, at this age, it becomes difficult. That is why I say I need a new model car.

When we go to the temple we don't know whether to give money to the panda or to the man who issues the receipt. Why has money become so important these days?

Money is important nowadays because this is the Kali yuga. There are four types of *purusharthas*, efforts, which a human being makes in life: *dharma*, to be virtuous; *artha*, to make money; *kama*, to fulfil all the desires and passions; and *moksha*, to attain liberation from bondage. So in the Satya, Treta, Dwapar and Kali yugas these four aims predominate according to the times. Now, in this Kali yuga you can keep dharma and moksha in a file. This is the age of artha and kama. Even if you go to God you want something from Him. I remember during my childhood, when I was seven or eight, that money was not important. But now it has become very important and is becoming even more important. A time may come when man will live only for money.

Therefore, when you go to the temple, the *panda*, the priest, wants money. If you give money to the man who

issues the receipt, that money goes to the temple fund, to the shareholders of that temple. The money that you put in the donation box goes to the government. There is a system of finance, a private trust and a temple trust run by the government. All the repairs and restoration have to be done by the government; that is the court ruling. The temple staff who look after the worship are paid by the temple trust. So that must have been the man who was giving the receipt.

These pandas are not worshippers, they are agents of the temple, like tourist agents. They have their own devotees and they go from village to village conducting katha and kirtan. They take prasad from the temple and keep people informed. They say what pooja or worship will be done in which month. When people come from those far off villages, the pandas look after their stay. Sometimes they have their own arrangement in dharmashalas. The pandas take them to the temple and tell them what pooja they have to do, on which day they have to do it and how much it will cost.

The pandas are purely a private agency, but not everybody can be a panda. These pandas keep diaries in which they write down the name, address and details of everyone they come across and for whom they do pooja. If my great-grandfather had done pooja here, there would be a reference to it somewhere in a diary. Historians are now picking up much of India's history from these pandas. The moment you arrive in Varanasi they know that Dr Manas Biswas from Datia has come. Your panda will be there and will show you, "Look, here is your great grandfather's name. He stayed here and did this pooja." He will have all the details! That system exists at all the ancient and historical temples of national stature, like Kashi Vishwanath, Puri, Badrinath and Kedarnath.

The pandas have a system of hereditary succession and they write down everything in detail. When Pandit Nehru went to a temple they told him when his grandfather had been there. Pandit Nehru was a brahmin, and brahmins in India generally make a point of going to the temple because

that is their dharma. They should definitely go to the deity of whichever city they are visiting and Nehru used to do so. Of course, Nehru was an atheist, a modern man who cared more for factories and industries than temples. He himself used to say, "I prefer the temples of the twentieth century." But still he visited the ancient temples.

Are the shraaddha ceremonies in Varanasi also registered?

The astrological ceremonies performed after death are different for different people. There is an annual *shraaddha*, or purification rite in honour of one's ancestors, which every family conducts for fifteen days in the month of Ashwin (September/October). This takes place in *Krishna paksha*, the dark fortnight. The first fortnight of Ashwin, called *pitripaksha*, is intended for shraaddha of male ancestors. If your great grandfather or someone died on the fifth day, then the shraaddha would be conducted on the fifth day of that month. If your great grandfather died in an accident, there is a certain day for that, not the day he died. If he died in the army or the time of his death was not known at all, there are different days again. There are also separate days allotted for the shraaddha of women, which is another matter.

The final oblations for shraaddha ceremonies are offered at two places: Brahmakapala and Gaya. Brahmakapala is in Badrinath, a short distance from Tapta Tirtha, where the Ganga takes a different turn. Everybody goes there to perform shraaddha. If the shraaddha is performed at Brahmakapala, you will not have to perform it again. It is also compulsory for every Hindu to have a shraaddha done in Gaya, an important pilgrimage centre located here in Bihar. Every Hindu will visit Gaya at least once in his lifetime to do the last rites of his ancestors. Suppose my father died, then I would go to Gaya at the end of one year to perform the shraaddha ceremony. There are other places also, such as Kashi Vishwanath, where prayers and oblations are permitted for the ancestors, but classically this is done at Gaya and Brahmakapala.

The followers of the Vedic religion are free to decide whether or not to accept these ceremonies; they are not compulsory. In many religions it is obligatory to perform certain rites, otherwise one is not considered to be a practising Catholic, Muslim or Jew. That doesn't happen in the Vedic religion. People are told how to perform the rites but they are not forced upon them. The code of shraaddha is laid down but many people disregard it. Different sects also have different viewpoints in this regard. Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj and Prarthana Samaj say that it makes no difference whether shraaddha is performed or not. Keshav Chandra Sen and Ram Mohan Roy used to speak about it in their own characteristic ways. Maharshi Dayananda had his views and thoughts. Thus we have different sects and thinkers. Some say, "What is the use of offering things to the dead? How can it reach them?" So they do not perform any rituals. Others refrain out of laziness, ignorance or for want of money.

Vedic dharma prescribes shraaddha as a set of sixteen samskaras. The first samskara is *jata karma* and the last is *antyeshti shraaddha*. Sixteen ceremonies have to be performed in relation to an individual. When a child is born, it is not enough to call a good doctor or a nurse and give him injections for immunity to certain diseases. Some religious ceremonies must also be done because the child who is born is not a stone but a living being. He can grow into a Christ, an Einstein, a Hitler or a Stalin. A child can grow into anything because you do not know his destiny. So the best *jata karma* must be infused in him.

When one dies, you don't just say that he is finished. How can you say that the soul, the spirit, the *atma* is nothing just because you cannot see it? There are many things which exist, although you cannot see them. In the same way, the *jivatma*, the individual soul, exists and it leaves the body at the time of death. The body is consigned to the flames, but the *jivatma* is an entity, a *beeja*, a seed, which leaves the body. Many people say that when a man dies, that is the end of him. However, death is not the end

of the jivatma, the consciousness, the self or the spirit; it is the end of the body.

There are many people who do not believe in life after death. They argue that if we cannot see the dead then they are not there. When a body is consigned to the flames and burnt to cinders, where is the possibility of rebirth, of returning here? There is only one lifetime and that is here and now. So live it up once and for all. It doesn't matter if you have to beg, borrow or steal, but go ahead and enjoy yourself.

With such an attitude, what meaning can shraaddha hold, apart from the social significance? If it is performed so that one may remember one's father, grandfather, great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather, is that not part of a social process? Should the present generation forget the past completely? Everybody keeps a photo of their great-grandfather in order to remember him. So, shraaddha gives an opportunity to remember the past, thus enhancing the social process. The forefathers are remembered on the occasion of the shraaddha ceremony, but there is another aspect to this ceremony as well. What happens to the individual soul after death?

Please explain what happens after death and what actually comprises the jiva or individual soul when it leaves the body.

The jiva leaves the body in the form of a seed. The astral body goes out with the subtle body. Many people wonder about its journey. How does it go, where does it go, which level does it go to? Where does it live, how does it survive, does it get hungry and thirsty? Does it remember the surviving mourners? Does it remember its own children? Does it remember that it has left a widow or an orphan? Does it remember that it has to pay so much or collect so much from that person? What about its needs, or do you say that it has no needs at all? How can you say that? What is the proof?

If you want to know everything about posthumous existence, about death and the hereafter, you should read

the *Garuda Purana*. In our country, this manual is read if there is a death in the family. The jivatma, the departing individual soul, has a subtle body. The subtle body is necessary if the departed soul has desires. All the passions and emotions inhabit the subtle astral body. Desire, anger and passion live in the astral body. Fear is also an attribute of the subtle body.

Desires are the mental invocations that you make. The body and the senses do not have desires, nor do the *karmendriyas*, the motor organs, or the *jnanendriyas*, the sense organs. They only have the power of action and perception, not volition or will. The *karmendriyas* have the power to act. The *jnanendriyas* have the power to perceive. They have the capacity of physical experience, like the experience of heat and cold, good or bad, but the willpower does not reside in the *karmendriyas*, the *jnanendriyas* or the muscles of the body. The willpower and the emotions are only in the mind.

The mind is the main part of the subtle astral body. The mind, comprised of *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara*, belongs to the astral body. The senses are part of the gross body. The physical or gross body consists of the *karmendriyas* and *jnanendriyas*. Perception does not take place because of the sense organs. The eyes see, they grasp the form of an object but they cannot differentiate the colour of the object, whether it is black or blue. Differentiation is the faculty of the subtle astral body.

The astral body discriminates between black and white. My eyes see black or geru and present it to the mind or brain. It is there that discrimination occurs: this is black, that is white; this is hot, that is cold; this is sweet, that is sour; this is good, that is bad. This quality is *viveka*, the power of discrimination. It is not an attribute of the *indriyas*, the eyes or the nose, it is a quality of the mind. The mind is the chief component of the subtle body, just as water is the chief component of the physical body. The *sukshma sharira*, or subtle body, is made up of *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara*. The *antahkarana* is a very complex subject.

How can we become a devout bhakta and attain the love of God when our devotion is so limited?

When the dal is too thin, what do you do to thicken it? Do you mix a little refined flour into it or do you mix curd? If you let it cook longer, the excess water is boiled away and the dal becomes thick. Similarly, if you cannot become a devout bhakta, go on doing more bhakti, go on putting more devotion into your life. There is no other remedy. The goal is difficult but practice is easy. Go on with regular practice and see the difference; the goal will be achieved. Doesn't a school child eventually obtain an MA degree? First he goes to primary school, then high school, then college, then university.

In spiritual life also the course is graded. Everybody wishes to attain the love of God in this lifetime, in this body, but it does not happen like that because it is not that easy. How interesting it would be if all students graduated from university at the same time with an MSc degree, a PhD and a DLitt? Can this happen? No, because they are all studying at different levels. Similarly, everyone wants to attain God in one lifetime, but if all the people leave Ayodhya, the place will be desolate and forlorn. This is not the law of creation. There must be someone ahead and someone lagging behind. So in spiritual life only one thing is essential – to refine the quality of bhakti just as one tries to improve the quality of the dal.

The one who walks on is bound to forge ahead. If I start walking from here, won't I reach my destination? This is what the saints and mahatmas tell us. When we start off we have to decide where we are going, what our destination is, our goal, then we must move in that direction. However, if we go on walking without a destination, we will reach somewhere, but not the particular destination which we decided on beforehand. How should we decide our goal? On what basis should we determine our aim? How should we decide what is the aim of our life?

Here is a common example. If a boy wants to get a girl, he has to first decide what relationship he wants with her.

Even so, if we want to attain God, first of all we must decide what our relationship is with God. What is the simplest relationship to establish with God? We may feel we are His son or daughter or friend, but we have to have that sentiment for Him. To like Him is a different matter. We may have a particular feeling for God because we like Him, but that is not enough. Whatever feeling we have for Him must be expressed through us in its real form.

If we consider ourselves to be a servant of God, then all the qualities of the servant should be expressed in our attitude. If we think of ourselves as the beloved of God, all the symptoms of a deep erotic relationship must arise in us, so that we feel the pangs of separation intensely and we lose sleep over Him. Mirabai has written about her sleepless nights, pining for God in many verses. She says that separation from God causes deep agony, like being a fish out of water.

If we consider ourselves as a servant of God, then God becomes our centre, the focus of our life's work. What is the psychology of a servant? How does he think? What is his mentality? That mentality must develop in us. If it does not, then it means that our relationship with God is not yet defined and genuinely felt. Our relationship with God must bring about the related sentiments. If you think you are a servant of God, then your personality must develop all those related qualities. How does a servant think? How does a mother think? How does a daughter think? Everybody has a particular psychology. It is not enough just to pay lip service and proclaim, "I am the servant of God."

Satsang 17

December 14, 1996, Afternoon

Swami Niranjan: Many people are enjoying the company, satsang and darshan of Sri Swamiji after a gap of many years. There are bhaktas who tell us that they are meeting Sri Swamiji for the first time in sixteen long years. Such long lost devotees and disciples have asked whether Sri Swamiji will still give mantra and sannyasa diksha? Those who have come for Sri Swamiji's darshan after a long interval know nothing about the new turn his life has taken.

It is natural that they should have such a question in their minds. I have seen with my own eyes that when Sri Swamiji used to give diksha, there would be a line of hundreds of aspirants. In Australia, he would start giving diksha at five a.m. and the line would not shorten by even an inch until noon. In India, aspirants sought diksha from him in their thousands. In 1983, when Sri Swamiji was in Raipur for Guru Poornima, there was such a crowd of seekers that Sri Swamiji was giving diksha continuously from six a.m. to two p.m. He sat in one posture, unmoving, being showered with rice and water throughout. People never thought of his predicament at all. Thought for the guru never crossed their minds.

People have no concept regarding guru or God. Why talk of them? Even a wife has no thought for her husband

or a husband for his wife. People are thoughtless; they have neither the understanding nor the imagination to think about another person's situation. They marry and beget children, and when they cannot manage their children they come running to the guru, seeking guidance and begging him to do something about their prodigal son. Did they seek his advice before getting married? When they begot their children, they never cared to seek his permission. Yet, when the children go astray, they come running to the guru and ask him what to do about the problem.

It is very difficult to make people understand this. Even so-called well-educated people do not have this simple idea. Villagers are better than city dwellers in this regard; at least they have some faith in their hearts. They have some thought for the guru, for God, for their families, but city people lack this quality altogether. If you look at yourself, you will see that this is correct.

I have also noticed how people think about sannyasins. They think it is the sole mission of a sannyasin to do good, to serve and help others. Sannyasins live for the service of others, so people want them to go on serving and helping the poor because they are all too selfish to do that work themselves. If there is no selfish object to be gained, most people never come forward with a desire to help or succour others. They want the sannyasin to shower altruistic benevolence on others, but they never think of helping him to do it.

About the time when Sri Swamiji left Munger, a family that had been close to him for years had a sudden calamity. A child in their household was bitten by a snake and fell unconscious. As Sri Swamiji was no longer in Munger those people came running to me for help. They pleaded with me to see the child and I readily went to their house. At that time I was very innocent and did not know the crooked ways of the world. I thought, let me help them, after all, they have been Sri Swamiji's disciples for a long time.

As I entered the house I saw a priest was already present. That priest had read the astrological chart of the child and

pronounced his prediction thus, “The child is destined to die of snakebite. Only one thing can save his life and that is if someone offers him his own life.” When I entered the house the mother told me, “My child is on the verge of death and there is no antivenene available in Munger. Our Panditji, who has been our family counsellor for generations, tells us that the child’s life can only be saved if someone resolves to give up his own life for the sake of the child. This is what the astrological chart tells us.”

So I asked, “Who is offering him life?” The mother said, “I cannot make the pledge because I have many duties to discharge. I have to bring up other children, worship our god and many other things.” I asked whether the father was ready to stake his life, and he replied, “If I die, who will make a living to sustain the family?” There was an old lady sitting in the corner, doing japa and turning her beads. When I asked if she would stake her life, as she was too old to live long, she replied, “No, do not say such things. I have not yet seen the face of my grandchild.”

Suddenly the words came out of her mouth, “Swamiji, why don’t you stake your life?” I was stunned and could not take in what she was asking. She went on to add, “After all, the lives of sadhus and sannyasins are meant for service and charity. So why don’t you part with your life for the sake of the child?” Such things touch the bottom line of selfishness. How I got out of that situation I will tell you another time. So, there are people who want sadhus and sannyasins to do such altruistic service as fulfils their selfish aims and desires.

What happens when you take mantra diksha? The guru gives you the mantra and you all think you have obtained a treasure with which you will negate or pay off all the sins of this life and gain merit. When you obtain such a precious endowment from the guru, which sets this life right as well as the life after death, what do you give in return? Agarbatti. **Sri Swamiji:** You can give it tomorrow also in Sitaji’s dowry. However, you should at least try to give golden bangles, a gold nose ring, earrings or a diamond ring for Sri Sitaji.

Here they offer agarbatti, an incense stick. This is how their brains work.

Swami Niranjan: And a rotten banana.

Sri Swamiji: No, even a rotten banana is a long shot. They offer a marigold garland and expect Sitaji to take it to her in-law's house. This way Sitaji will really be disgraced in Ayodhya, so get her a good gold locket!

Swami Niranjan: Thus people offer an incense stick and a marigold flower that they got for a four anna coin by the roadside.

Sri Swamiji: Shall I tell you the truth? The first point is that they do not know where God is. They write to God, c/o Nowhere, and we are the postmen. They ask this one and that one for the whereabouts of God and then say, "Brothers, there is no God here." We return such letters without addresses to the dead letter office. First and foremost, everyone, man or woman, rich or poor must know where God lives and who He is. Only then can they give something in offering or write to Him or pray. But nobody seems to know the whereabouts of God, even though it is written in the scriptures.

The Vedas, Upanishads, *Ramayana* and all religions tell us where to find God and what He does. Everything is written down, yet people just do not pay any heed. People's concepts about God are not clear. Their minds are confused and their ideas are foggy. God resides in everything, in the flora and fauna of the plant kingdom and in the animal kingdom. He lives in the rich as well as the poor, in the good as well as the bad, in the wise as well as the ignorant. God pervades everything, just as electricity comes through the bulb and the microphone. God is the power that is immanent and nearest to you, but you do not experience His proximity.

Service of the poor

If you write to God, c/o Everywhere, we will deliver your letter to Him. Worship and devotion to God are performed in a variety of ways. We teach asana, pranayama and

kundalini yoga to the rich, those who are affluent and have a lot of leisure. We teach them many things, but does this mean that God does not live among the poor, the hungry, the sick and the distressed? Have you ever thought about this? Have you ever felt that God lives in the poor? God lives in the church and the temple as well, but have you ever thought that God also lives in a poor man who is suffering, and that when you see that man and deny his need, you are denying the God within him?

It is like having a cheap aluminium ring worth a few annas studded with diamonds worth fifty thousand rupees. Someone shows you the ring and you see the aluminium, but completely ignore the diamonds. This is what happens when you see a tree as a tree, a man as a man, an animal as an animal, a stone as a stone, a dog as a dog, an ass as an ass, a prostitute as a prostitute, a sadhu as a sadhu. You are captivated by the physical form, the visible exterior, the tangible cage. Therefore, you only see the aluminium and miss out on the diamond within. *Siya-Ramamaya sab jaga jani* – “The whole world is permeated with the inseparable pair, Sita and Rama.”

Oh, how many examples I could quote! I could go on for hours on end. There is not a single scripture which says that God is confined to a particular place. Nor is there a single religion that chains God to one particular location. All religions unanimously teach that the best way to worship God is by serving the poor, the hapless and the needy. Even the rich are unhappy, suffering and in need of service. So, we teach them asana and pranayama and draw their attention to the God hidden within. But have you thought about the God who inhabits the hungry, the starving and the sick? All religions, especially our own, have made it clear that *Lokavat leela kaivalyam* – “All this is the *lila*, the divine sport of God.” He hides Himself within a blind man like Surdas, within a jnani, an erudite scholar, within a woman, and also within a dacoit. He hides Himself in any garb that He likes and puts on an act. A play is performed on the cosmic stage.

World family

The whole of creation, the whole of life, is a drama that we watch endlessly. While watching this endless play, you and I feel outwitted and helpless! If someone takes diksha from the guru with this kind of sentiment, in full humility, his diksha will have fruition. But the one who seeks diksha for his own selfish ends, for his own progress and development, and who works for himself, gets fruit of a temporary nature only. His fruition is momentary and fear is lurking even in success. He gets a son but fears for his survival, so he is never actually happy or at peace. Suddenly the lottery is drawn in his favour. He receives a windfall of fifteen million rupees, yet he is worried and scared of the income tax people.

In order to develop a different attitude, you should think, “I have three children of my own, but there is a needy orphan who is intelligent and deserving, yet has no money for school fees. He is also my child.” Young girls remain unmarried for want of a dowry that their parents cannot raise, but you are only concerned about marrying your own sons and daughters. You are so engrossed in yourselves that you have forgotten the reality, the totality of God’s existence. You are totally occupied with yourself: my fever, my headache, my poverty, my wife, my children, my, my, my. What is this damn ‘my’! You keep on harping about ‘my this’ and ‘my that’. Your world ends once you have thought about yourself, your wife and your children.

How small you have made yourselves. But still you pay lip service and proclaim, *Udaarcharitaanaam tu Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*. You claim the whole world is your family while here I am, weary from trying to provide enough clothing just for the people of Rikhia. Months pass and nothing gets completed. I am unable to provide for even the small population of Rikhia panchayat, whom I consider my family. I am talking about a very practical reality. I belong to Rikhia panchayat. Even if I cannot cater to all their needs, I can call the whole world my family. But merely talking about it does not make the world my family. Practical steps must be taken.

Compassion for all beings

The world family begins with your own next door neighbours. The world family starts from your own village, from the people in your immediate neighbourhood. Don't talk about Vedanta as long as their misery, shocking condition and abject poverty does not touch a chord in your heart, as long as their suffering does not become part of your own suffering, their difficulty does not become your difficulty, their pangs of hunger do not become your pangs! It is wrong to do so. It would be better to say, "I do not believe in God and that is all." God permeates the whole of creation like electricity, water and air. The best and easiest way to attain Him is to have a genuine feeling of compassion for your fellow man.

Until and unless you consider another person like yourself, there is non-conduction within you. Do you know how electricity is conducted? There is bad conduction and good conduction. Thinking of others as you think of yourself means *atmabhava*, including everybody within your own heart. The Vedas, Upanishads, rishis and munis have told us that *atmabhava*, sympathy and feeling oneness with others, identifying with their woes, is the *sarvatma bhava*, which is all-encompassing affection for the creatures of the whole world. You must have the same intensity of feeling and compassion for the suffering of others as you have for your own self.

I have a pain in my arm and I am uneasy; I cannot bear it. I try to relieve the pain by any means possible. I apply Iodex then something else; it is a matter of urgency for me. You have a pain in your arm and I come to hear of it, but I do not feel it inside myself. I do not suffer as you are suffering and as a result I do not treat it as an urgent matter. In my own case, I run helter-skelter and spare no effort to find a remedy immediately. If there is no Iodex at home, I make someone run or, even better, cycle to the shop and see to it that my pain is relieved as quickly as possible. But when it is your turn, I may postpone the treatment or decide to send you to the doctor the next day.

You must pay attention to what I am pointing out. This is not a joke that you can laugh away. You may view it from the social, spiritual, national or conceptual angle, you may take note of it from any point of view, but what I am saying is the truth. It is a matter of fact.

Story of Saint Eknath

There is a short sweet story that relates to this topic. As a matter of fact, there are thousands of such stories, but this is a story about a saint by the name of Eknath. He was taking Ganga water to the temple in Rameshwaram to worship Shiva there. This is a Vedic tradition. Imagine, about seven hundred years ago, a person carrying water from the north of India to the southern tip, walking all the way. It is not like the journey from Sultanganj to Deoghar, which is an easily negotiable distance. I am talking about the times when this distance used to be covered by foot in the absence of transport facilities and through all kinds of hazardous weather and conditions.

Thus, after braving all the difficulties the saint finally managed to reach Rameshwaram. He was about to enter the Shiva temple when his eyes fell on a donkey, dying of thirst. He was in a dilemma and wondered whether he should offer the precious holy water for Shiva's abhishek as intended, or whether he should first quench the thirst of the parched animal. After all, the man was a saint and a theist who believed in God. How could he have walked the enormous distance otherwise? He believed in the God residing in the temple, but he also knew that God is omnipresent.

Having such faith, the saint immediately saw God in the donkey. God is glowing even in a donkey, and that God is to be propitiated and pleased. So, he gave the water to the donkey at once and saved its life. It was a small matter but because he was a saint he could do this good turn without hesitation. Had we been in his place, we would have dismissed the donkey as a beast of burden, not deserving of the holy water brought so far with such difficulty. Our brains



School children waiting for prasada



International audience at Ram Naam Aradhana



Distributing prasada to the villagers



Sitaji being carried for the wedding

would never have thought of giving the water meant for God to a worthless creature like a donkey. But the brain of a saint always thinks the right way. Our brains think just the other way around. Our world itself is topsy-turvy.

God lives in the trees

There are many instances that illustrate the nature of reality to us. These examples show that God pervades each and every iota of creation. God lives not only in human beings, not only in the poor and the sick, but also in the trees. I get up at five a.m., take a bucket and water Tulsi first, then the peepal tree and then all the other trees in my garden. I have fixed an order of priority. I cannot water all the trees here myself as there are far too many. But as I water a few of them I keep on chanting my mantra simultaneously and I feel I am being blessed. It is doing me immense good. What better exercise can an old man like me have than watering plants?

Why do I do this? Because trees are devatas, gods. Tulsi is a goddess, Rudraksha is a deity. We have rudraksha trees. Rudraksha is Shiva's favourite. Mahatmas were enlightened and attained jnanam, wisdom, under the trees. Lord Buddha was enlightened under the banyan tree and became a jnani. Dattatreya, who was the embodiment of the trinity, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh, was enlightened under the gular tree. He attained jnana and samadhi under a tree.

Offering to the Lord

I do not care for samadhi myself. I only want to be able to remove the pain and misery of the helpless. It needs God's special power to remove the woes of suffering humanity, to wipe away the tears of crying people. It is a spiritual power, not an ordinary power, which enables one to alleviate human sorrow. If you really want to help people, you need a special power from God.

When I sit in front of Raghunathji to do my pooja, I feel ashamed to offer him a mere *batasha*, a sweet. After all, my Lord is not a fakir. He is an emperor, Samrat Chakravarti.

How can you offer a sesame seed to an elephant? Lord Rama may not be a god for you, but you will at least accept that he is the king and emperor of Ayodhya. He is a regal person to whom a paltry prasad like batasha or a betel nut simply cannot be offered! So I said, “No, let me make out a list of the royal offerings to be made to the regal hero, like twenty rickshaws, ten ladies’ cycles, sixteen spades, forty saris, twenty dhotis, ten pairs of jeans . . .” In this way I go on in my mind, making an offering to the Lord.

At first I was a bit nervous and worried as to how and where I could get these offerings, especially since I am now totally disconnected from Munger, economically, financially and constitutionally. I am an Alakh Niranjana man. Yes, that disciple is dear to me. He comes and connects Munger with me through his resources. Otherwise I am not a grandfather enjoying rights over the earnings of the grandchildren until the end of his life. One day I made a list with great hesitation, and the same evening a telephone call came offering a cow and many other items for prasad. So by evening everything was arranged.

Agreement with Lakshmi

I must tell you one thing very seriously. I have an agreement with Lakshmi. It is not a joke though I say things in a jocular manner. Lakshmi said to me, “I permit you to meet all your needs but not your desires. Yes, I can grant you a loincloth, a blanket and a candle because these are your needs. But the moment you ask for a fancy object out of desire, I will immediately cancel the blank cheque I have sanctioned for you.” This is exactly how it is and in spite of all this I know for sure that without God’s sanction man cannot even do one good turn. If you and I think that we can do good in the world, then we are wrong in our thinking. At least that’s what I think.

Every morning I sit here and hand over the prasad list to Swami Satsangi. So far Lakshmi has approved all my bills. No bill of mine is pending with her. Lakshmi is in charge of all the wealth in the world. Saraswati is in charge of all

the arts and learning. Bhavani is in charge of all the power and energy. I regard Lakshmi as the highest because she is the goddess of Kali yuga, the present age. Of course, all the goddesses are important.

Therefore, what Swami Niranjana said earlier was correct. I am not going to give diksha to anybody. I am no longer interested in initiating people. If you can help one brilliant student to obtain a higher education, if you can provide treatment for one sick person, if you can support one needy family, you are very close to me. But if you only want to give me agarbatti, get out. I don't care! I'm not a man of agarbatti. Incense sticks are of no use to me. I get so much agarbatti, I give it to the villagers for their pooja.

Self-imposed poverty

I am also telling this to the sadhus, who are spoilt and spoiling others as well. Why did the betel leaf rot? Why did the horse get waylaid? Why has the disciple gone astray? It is because they were not tossed around from time to time. Nobody knows how to manage them. I know how to manage with ease and without any ado. What is cooking today? Where has this watch come from? Oh, it is from Switzerland. This is first class, the latest watch of today. Such things are suitable for householders, but they are not meant for sadhus. We sadhus are the poorest people in the world, but we are poor in a very unique way. Kabirdas says:

*There is no personal desire or worry
The mind is free from care
Those who seek nothing
Are the real kings and masters.*

A person who lives a life of self-imposed poverty, free from desire, is the king of kings. A sadhu should live like a poor man. This is the dharma of a sadhu, but sadhus want to live like the rich. However, if a sadhu remains poor from choice, his radiance will grow, his spirituality will spread far and wide. He will be able to stand in front of people like a lighthouse. Poverty is painful only as long as you think

yourself to be poor, as long as you allow your desires to multiply. You have too many desires and ambitions! The measuring rod of poverty today is the number of desires that a man has.

Therefore, sannyasins must decide beforehand that, if they want to have any connection with Swami Satyananda, they should have one relationship alone. I have left my parents and come away. You have an eternal obligation towards the mother who gave birth to you. It is a relationship of eternal gratitude, an eternal indebtedness. How could I have been born at all if there had been no mother? If I have left behind the one for whom I have eternal gratitude, do you think it will be difficult for me to leave you? A sadhu is a friend of none.

I am talking not only of my sannyasins, but of the sannyasins throughout India. Ashrams must be brought from the cities to the panchayats. Ashrams should take an assignment of one panchayat each. Sannyasins have unlimited wealth, arts, knowledge and learning. They are pundits, erudite scholars, who read and write a lot and have unlimited capacities and powers. They are in touch with the people who matter. After I came to Rikhia, the electricity supply became constant. Prior to that, although electrical wires had been put up from Deoghar to Rikhia, there was never any power.

Last evening, after the electricity went off, a phone call was made directly to the chairman of BSEB. The call was not made to the electrical engineer but straight to the chairman to ask him to resume the supply. A sannyasin has a definite influence on people and he must use it for their welfare. There are thousands of panchayats in India. Sannyasins should go to each panchayat, give satsang to the people and organize the recitation of *Ramayana*. Every Marga Shirsha, on Shukla Panchami, the fifth day of the bright fortnight, they should also help the villagers to celebrate Sita's marriage and let the people enjoy the name of God being chanted, that's all.

Satsang 18

December 15, 1996

Today is the wedding day. There will be a lot of noise and hubbub. The clamour and clatter in life starts only after marriage; before that life is insipid. So go ahead and celebrate with a big fanfare and loud jubilation. Today is the grand day of the wedding ceremony of the people's most loved and worshipped Sitaji, who is also the most venerated Devi of the Vedic dharma. This wedding took place thousands of years ago when the couple were in their physical form, and it is to commemorate that actual wedding that we are celebrating this wedding.

All the people from our town, neighbouring places and also from all parts of the world have come together to celebrate the wedding. It is not a small, local event between the baratis of Ayodhya and the saratis of Mithila. Today people have come from overseas countries to take part in the wedding celebration and they are eager, curious and delighted to watch the grand event. Sita is the epitome of virtue and chastity for every woman in the world. So go ahead and celebrate an uproarious gala wedding. This is the wedding day and what better occasion could there be for a real bash?

Before marriage life is silent, but after marriage life becomes tumultuous, full of romance, ups and downs,

laughter and tears. The enjoyment and luxury, friction and struggle, explosions and upheavals in life begin only after marriage. Before that, the life of a bachelor is very colourless and insipid. There is no hot chilli, no tangy pickle in the khichari. Marriage means there is noise all around and loud rejoicing. You should welcome it instead of asking people to maintain silence. How can we be quiet at a wedding celebration? In fact, it is a day to be overtly expressive. It is a day for the bridegroom's party to enjoy food and delicacies. The bride's party in and around Rikhia has to fast, so no food arrangements are made for them.

Last night there was a lot of fun. At two a.m. Swami Niranjan came to my door and expressed anxiety about the seating arrangements. He wondered whether there would be enough mats and rugs to seat the enormous crowds that would pour in for the wedding. I said that as a *barati*, a member of the groom's party, he need not worry, because the *saratis*, the bride's party, would look after it. If he was anxious then he should switch sides and plunge headlong into the work. So today Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi have had no time even to bathe, let alone to eat! What to do? If being in the bridegroom's party does not help, you have to cross the floor and be in the bride's party and take up responsibility for the overall arrangements. They told me they would eat only in the evening, and I told them to eat only after the marriage procession leaves the place along with the bride!

Let the bride's party be on their toes, with their blood pressure rising and hearts pounding. Let them be head over heels in hectic activity and arrange for the proper dowry items. Are there cars and scooters offered? Sita needed none of these modern vehicles; she went in the *rath*, the chariot, but now our modern Sita will have the best car! Are you prepared to give it or not? If you cannot manage it, we will walk out on you!

All our daughters, daughters-in-law and womenfolk have come here in all their finery for the wedding. It feels so wonderful! Here are Sita's friends and companions. Get up

and show how beautiful you all look. Those girls are Sita's friends, her *sakhis*, so they are a very important part of her wedding. It is they who will bring her to the mandap. Aren't you feeling beautiful while watching all this beauty?

I was wondering to myself: This is a royal wedding, Sita herself is a princess and yet there are no dignitaries among the wedding guests. Then last night Rita Verma arrived. She is a Member of Parliament, negotiating for the reservation of seats for women. She is the most appropriate person to bring Sita to the wedding place. She will bring Sita at exactly two p.m., the *muhurta* time.

Today many people of my own town have also come in addition to the foreign guests. This is the wedding of Sita, the darling of millions and millions throughout the ages. She was an ideal of chastity, a lady who suffered and who faced tragedy throughout her life, but never compromised her chastity. She is the lady who caused the destruction of an atrocious, demonical empire and whom we adore as divinity personified – Sita-Rama.

Thousands of years ago a girl was fostered in the north of Bihar, across the Ganga, in the family of King Janaka. She was found completely forsaken in a field when it was being ploughed. The king picked up that baby and took care of her. She became very powerful and important. The *Ramayana* says she was so beautiful that she represented the totality of beauty. There is nothing in this world to be compared to that beauty. After her marriage she was kidnapped by Ravana, a demonical king, and that is the story.

Sita was married on this day. This is how it happened. When she was just five years old, her father wanted to perform pooja. At that time she moved a big bow, which was the family heirloom, from the sadhana room all by herself. It was so heavy that no ordinary man could lift it, yet she just picked it up with her left hand. So her foster father, Janaka, said, "This girl will be married only to the one who can lift this bow." It was Rama who could do this and nobody else. So that is how he was selected to be Sita's bridegroom.

In today's program, first of all there will be the celebration, and then Sita will be brought here. From tomorrow onwards you will be able to see Sita and Rama together. Then we will have dancing because today is a day of dance and music; no lectures, no learned discourses, no Vedanta. There will be dance and music instead and then you may go home. The program will continue until December 24th, for one full month.

Invitation to Lord Shiva

I forgot to tell you the most important thing. Do you know why I am celebrating this wedding? Shankarji was present when Sri Rama was born in order to have his darshan. Shankarji also attended the wedding of Rama and Sita. I am trying to provide him with an occasion to come to Rikhia. Somehow he must be roped in. I do not go to Deoghar. I am stationed here, leading a static life, but I fully trust and believe that Shankarji will definitely come here to attend the wedding. He may come in a formless state or in the guise of a sadhu or fakir to attend this most holy occasion. My Lord, come in whichever form you want, but do come!

We don't care in which form Shiva comes because all forms are His form for us. They are all the manifestations of Shiva himself. I am telling you all this again so that if any doubts are still lingering in your minds, they will vanish. Sita's wedding has been arranged with only one objective in mind, and the Ram Naam Aradhana festival has been arranged with the same singular objective. Shankarji has declared in the past that he will certainly go to attend the wedding of Sri Rama and Sitaji. He will also be present on the auspicious occasion of the birth of Sri Rama. If you don't believe me, read Kakabhushundi's dialogue in *Ramacharitamanas*. Go and verify it with the scholars; it is an unchallenged certainty. I am dead sure about it. Shankarji will definitely come, but will he come as a barati or a sarati? Of course, he will come as a barati, after a liberal dose of bhang. So wait for him patiently.

The wedding

You may sit wherever you want to. You may stand up or sit on the ground. We could not make perfect arrangements. People have come here from Italy, Yugoslavia, France, America, England, Australia, Greece and other parts of the world. As all the bridegroom's people arrive let people sit in between the rows as well and wherever there is empty space, let it be occupied by the people. Today Sita's wedding is being celebrated. Afterwards there will be Purushottam Jalota's music recital and Rila Hota's dance recital. On wedding days dance and music, rejoicing and festivities take place. Everybody is very enthusiastic about marriage. It is the most interesting affair in life. I think those who miss marriage miss the bus. I was one of them, but I don't regret it.

The objective of celebrating the Ram Naam Aradhana and the wedding of Sita and Rama is only one. It is so Shiva will come down to attend it. He was present at Sri Rama's birth and marriage so he is bound to come to this wedding celebration. This is not a conference for musicians to present their art and leave. Shiva makes a point of appearing wherever Rama's name is chanted. Why does he come? Because Sri Rama is his ishta deva! So do sing a song about Shiva. We have thought about him and that remembrance will reach him. Wherever he is, he must be listening to it. Those who have the eyes to see will discern him somewhere. I know nothing more than this.

People have given the dowry to Sita with great affection. Remember that the sadhu is not lapping it up. All dowry gifts will most certainly reach their due destination, which is with the young girls aged fourteen to sixteen years who are to become brides. I have many such young daughters. All those young girls in our panchayat and from the neighbouring villages will take these dowry gifts with them to their husband's house when they get married. So you don't need to worry. I wanted to bring those dowry articles here and show them to you, but they are asking me to go there and touch them.

Our Sita is very fortunate. The original Sita received her dowry only from the people of Mithila. Our Sita is getting her dowry from all over the world, from England, America, Germany, Japan, Italy, France. She is getting gifts from everywhere.

Today Sita has come and we have celebrated her wedding with Sri Ramachandra. Until half an hour ago, Sri Rama was a bachelor. Now the creatrix of the universe has come to join him on this earthly plane. On this most auspicious and holy occasion of Sri Sita-Ram's wedding, a dance recital has been organized and many more programs of dance and music will follow it. Throughout the whole month of Aghan, we will enjoy the wedding celebration and the collection and distribution of dowry items in the name of Sri Sita.

Sita's wedding is part of the Ram Naam Aradhana designed to invite Sri Shankarji in our midst once again in modern times. Lord Shiva attended the actual wedding in the past and we believe, trust and have full faith that he has definitely arrived here and we will all enjoy his affection, blessings, grace and his protective umbrella over our heads. The dancers, singers, musicians, performers, organizers, spectators and the noisemakers in the wedding celebration are being blessed by his divine grace.

Do not tell people to keep quiet today. It is only natural that they are in such a mood. It is the wedding day which sets off the entire hullabaloo and hubbub. As a bachelor, you are Alakh Niranjan. But once you are married duets start, verbal and physical fights, fretting and frowning, poverty and privation, affluence and luxury, health and sickness. All the upheavals in life start only after marriage. Life after marriage becomes colourful and eventful.

Satsang 19

December 16, 1996, Morning

*T*he rural community of India can understand very well if you relate divinity to reality because this is an experience for them. If you relate divinity to reality, they understand divinity in the context of reality. If you explain Sita, they understand jivatma. If you tell them about Rama then they will understand about paramatma or atma brahman. When you say that Sita and Rama are one then they understand Adwaita. This is the rural mind of India. The urban mind is different. First you have to teach jivatma and paramatma, then explain Sita and Rama. It is just the other way around.

Cultural programs in rural areas are not very serious. If a program of Shiva and Parvati's marriage is announced here, people from the whole area will come pouring in, even if they are not invited. It is not necessary to explain God, where He lives, what His qualities are. This is a waste of time. Just experience Him. When sugar is manufactured, how is it done, who does it, is the sweetness like this or that? All these questions bother educated intellectual types of people. Those with simple minds just taste the sugar and have the experience first hand.

Indian villagers have simple minds and experience is the best method of teaching them anything. They are not

interested in going to school for the sake of learning. They are attracted only by the free midday meal provided by the government. They are not serious about book learning. If you offer them the *Ramayana*, they will tell you they cannot read. But when I told them to learn to read it they did so in two or three months. Now all those village women sitting there can read the *Ramayana* very well, though they persist in saying that they cannot. They are reading the *Ramayana* just now. When I tell the village girls to learn to read and stand on their own two feet, they reply that it is of no use to them as they will only be cooking, cleaning, washing and begetting children anyway when they get married. Education does not help them in these chores at all. This is the reply a twelve year old girl gives me.

Social reform

You have to understand human psychology in order to change society. The government has difficulty because of its lack of understanding of the rural psychology. When I first came here I never thought of myself as a social reformer. If there are problems in your family, I will not open my mouth about them. It is not my business because I am not a social reformer. My mind is not that of a social reformer either. I can become a reformer only when I have reformed myself. When I have not reformed myself, how can I reform you? One who cannot reform himself has no right to reform others. It is all idle talk. That is what Mahatma Gandhi used to say.

Now these villagers have decided upon a consensus that widows should get remarried. So notes like this are exchanged between the villagers and myself. Those widows who do not want to remarry should be left alone. It is a good thing if they want to remain alone – Alakh Niranjana, but there are many other factors involved in the widow remarriage issue, like economic and emotional problems. Widow remarriage has now become the norm in all the villages here. The government formulates laws, but what can laws do to bring about change?

Spiritual foundation

When you want to build a house you don't start from the roof, you start from the foundations. The individual and the society are the foundation of a nation. Laws, regulations and legislation are all subsidiary. Most laws are not intended for a national purpose; they are made so that other countries do not question you about their absence. Laws are made just for eyewash. Similarly, rules are made in an ashram because there is a pressure from outside to make them. If you don't make rules, people will confront you, saying, "Why aren't there any rules?"

We now have a law banning child marriages, just to show off to the world that we have a law on this matter. Even in our homes we have rules because of the pressure from our neighbours. Nevertheless families and societies do not run by rules. Families and societies thrive only when their foundations are strong. The foundation of any society is its spirituality. It may be in the form of the Koran, the Bible or the *Ramayana*. Whatever form spirituality adopts should be the basis of society. It is only by reading such books that people appreciate and accept spiritual values. A nation should be secular, but it should not condemn or criticize different religions or religious customs.

In India about seventy percent of the population lives in villages. Unless and until the villages progress, the nation cannot progress. It is for this reason that backwardness, poverty, illiteracy, squalor and lawlessness have become rampant in India and have isolated the villages. Most of the government money is spent in the cities and, therefore, people from the villages rush to the cities and overcrowd them. Once a villager lives in the city he goes out of gear; he gets corrupted and goes astray. He gets culture shock; he wants to drink Pepsi and Coke.

Spiritual journey

Yesterday the whole town of Deoghar was full of *darshanarthis* who had come from many places to participate in the wedding. They were not ordinary tourists; they had all

come here for a special purpose, to gain a deeper understanding. The whole *Ramayana*, including Sita and Rama's wedding, is the philosophy of the spiritual history of man. All the episodes: Rama's exile, the abduction of Sita, Sindhu Tarang, the burning of Lanka, the killing of Ravana, reflect the spiritual journey of the jivatma. The *Ramayana* is a reflection of the spiritual life of man from bondage to liberation. You may interpret the character of Sita as jivatma and Ravana as the representation of the ten indriyas and twenty vrittis. The *Ramayana* happens every day. Do not say that Rama never was; he is spiritual philosophy personified.

People first understand the esoteric meaning and then accept Sri Sita-Ram. The second mentality is to first understand the personages of Sita-Ram and then turn to the underlying philosophy. The Indian village mind functions like this. The villager first understands Sita to be the daughter of Mithila, who was taken away by Ravana, the king of Lanka. Rama killed him and brought Sita back. They understand this in story form first and then go into the spiritual dimensions. Thus the uneducated villagers experience both the exoteric and esoteric *Ramayana*. But their urban intellectual counterparts go about it by interpreting jivatma, paramatama, jnanendriyas, trishna and such things in the *Ramayana* before the human side of the story. The story becomes important for them only as a representation of a philosophy.

I also read the Bhagavat, which is essentially philosophy. People do not give as many discourses on the *Ramayana* as the Bhagavat because the *Ramayana* is just the story of Rama and Sita. I am not interested in the philosophy of the scriptures because I've already mastered it thoroughly by being well versed in the Upanishads and Vedas. But I like *Ramacharitamanas* as it narrates a plot, episode by episode. In between there is stress given to those parts, which are *param durgam*, unfathomable to follow. I follow these and the truth is driven home to me. I catch the purport then I talk about it. I like the story line of the *Ramayana* so much that I go on reading and re-reading it again and again.

All of life is spiritual

Everybody has his own way of understanding these books. The best lesson I have learned from them is that after you finish with worldly duties you must leave the household. But I cannot talk about such things because I hold that remaining in the world is a big spiritual endeavour or sadhana in itself. To live in the world is spiritual life, whether you live properly or not. Whether you live like a devata, a sadhu or a devil, life in the world is all a spiritual process. When you were in middle school, did you know anything about MA classes? When you were in secondary school, did you know what a PhD entailed? You have to pass through all the stages and grades. Can you say that education means only a Masters degree, and that kindergarten, primary, middle and high school studies are not education at all? Similarly, whatever happens in life is part of spiritual life.

Wherever you are in life is a part of spiritual life. Whatever happens within the entire creation also takes place within the gambit of spiritual life. There is nothing exclusive and nothing excluded. The whole of human life is spiritual, not only when you do pooja. Life is your school; the world is your university. *Grihastha ashrama*, householder life, is your university and husband and wife are two different faculties. Production of children is another faculty. Birth and death are experiences. In life you experience happiness and sorrow through the mind. It is through suffering, sorrow and distress that you learn what misery is. There is sickness, a quarrel, the death of a close relative; all these bring you pain and make you experience what sorrow is. Then you try to distract the mind and find some deviation for it.

Is it all right to feel temporary disgust and tiredness towards worldly things?

It is all right and it is a remedy. Thus you turn to God, seek the satsang of sadhus, go on pilgrimages, undertake austerities or cry bitterly. It depends what course you would take upon yourselves. But after getting some relief, leave the source and means of such solace. You are unconsciously

trying to transcend the pain, to separate yourself from that experience. That is what happens in yoga; you separate yourself from the experience of 'I am'. You become a witness, a *sakshi*. You are always enjoying and learning everything, but unconsciously. You are in school all the time but the tragedy is you don't know it.

That is why you have tests. In every course there is a compulsory test. You have to take this examination: birth and death, pain and pleasure, suffering and enjoyment, tragedy and comedy. How do you pass? How do you come out untouched, unhurt, and unscathed? When you are wounded you run away, but all you need to do is become aware and remain aware of all the tests that you are taking. There are 8,400,000 incarnations, wombs through which you pass. In different incarnations you have passed through different schools. For example, you have fear and jealousy which were learned when you were animals. In man the emotions of fear, jealousy, attraction and aversion are vestiges of animal incarnations in bygone lifetimes. The Lord describes such people as being of animal instinct.

You have been to school formally in the past, but even now you are schooling yourself. In the classrooms you have learned algebra and geometry theorems and what a triangle and a hexagon are. Similarly, in your previous lifetime you have already learned what jealousy, love, hatred, anger and cravings are. You have already learned a lesson about them previously and that knowledge comes in handy now. All creatures, birds, dogs, cats, elephants, horses and asses, belong to the primary class. Man is like a matriculate. He is out of high school and on the threshold of college education. After entering college on the basis of what he has already learned at school, he understands further.

Why is man able to understand this life? Because of what he has already learned in his previous incarnations. How does a man know love, fear, jealousy or tragedy? How does he know faith or belief? Because he has already learned about them in his previous incarnations. That also means that one is the same person throughout all the incarnations,

even as one is the same in kindergarten, primary school, high school, college and university. The classes are different, but the student is the same.

The same person continues through innumerable incarnations. The Jain philosophy also says this. There are creatures of one, two, three, four and five sense organs respectively. In man, however, there is also the mind, intellect, ego and consciousness. There is the rise of *jnanam*, self-awareness, in man. All the previous incarnations are without *jnanam*; there is no awareness. When a dog is angry or barking it does not know that it is angry or barking. It is just blindly following the instincts. Now, as I am talking I know that I am talking. I am a witness to my own action of talking. I know that I know that I know that I know that I know. This is the speciality of man. He is self-conscious.

The instincts: food, sleep, sexual drive and fear are common to both men and animals, but man has an extra faculty. For example, when he goes to college there is a change in his intelligence and personality. Man has *jnanam*, which means awareness of oneself in relation to time and space. Man knows what he is. He knows when he receives knowledge by perception. Birds, donkeys and dogs behave instinctively. They cannot tell the difference between the changes in their surroundings nor can they anticipate them. Sparrows wake up very early but they do not do this knowingly; they just follow their instincts. When it gets dark during an eclipse, birds go to their nests because they think it is evening. This is called instinct which means natural disposition.

Is the witness really different from the experience? Isn't it true that when one is witnessing, there is no difference between the witness and the experience?

There are differences between the experience and experiencer, but when there is a total merger of personality into one's own self, or Adwaita as you call it, then there is no experience and no experiencer, both merge into one. That is the ultimate reality, or rather I would say that is the ultimate

experience or the ultimate happening. But experience and experiencer are always there in the realm of duality. Certainly we don't know whether there is still duality or there is total Advaita in the ultimate sense. Nobody has given the final word about it.

How can we function at different levels simultaneously?

It is not so difficult. You do not need the faculty of distinguishing between experience and experiencer to function; it just depends on common sense. Even a yogi or siddha can function if he has common sense. He who has become one with the Supreme can also function provided he has common sense.

When you ask such long-winded questions I am in trouble because I've given up all that. I do not want to think so much. You become too intellectual, too academic. Your brains are muddled and perplexed. All your questions are just a means of passing the time. These questions and answers are not going to reform you. When the mind becomes quiet and no desire arises for achieving anything, it is filled with bliss. The mind then enjoys complete harmony, identification with nature and everything around it.

I am happy with just one roti and then singing bhajans the rest of the day. All these questions regarding the nature of God, whether God is one or a multiplicity, whether He is with form or formless, ask them of another mahatma. Don't bother me with them. I just open my mouth in between, but I don't mean to answer such questions. Because I talk, people throng to sit around me. I blurt out something, but I am no longer interested in this style of talk and I know it does no one any good. It is just entertainment, a pastime, and an amusement for people.

You like to listen to this talk, that's all, but it gets you nowhere. No kingdom is earned by it. To get somewhere man has to look and walk within. The simplest and the easiest ways are to find out by one's own self, by one's own exploration and quest. In our culture there are thousands of books, a great academic wealth through which people,

including Shankaracharya, have tried to explain and communicate the higher reality. There are people interested in listening to these words even now.

In the Ramacharitamanas is there a part after the downfall of Ravana where Rama doubts Sita's faith and loyalty?

Rama loved Sita very much and he had no doubt in his mind, but he was a powerful emperor and he had defeated Ravana, another very powerful emperor. Ravana and most of his army died but some of his people were still living in different places. They had to find some way to destroy Rama without using military force and they discovered the weakness in his society. The social ethics of Ayodhya, in particular, and India, in general, were that if your wife remains with another man for a year, you cannot take her back. That was the weak point in the society, so they struck the blow at that point! They started the rumour.

This was a very sensitive issue at the time and still is today, at least in India. So Rama had no choice. He could not stay with Sita because the whole kingdom asked him, "What exactly are you trying to tell us?" So he thought it was much better if Sita went. She was not hurt because she was not a brahmin, vaishya or shudra. Sita was a kshatriya, and kshatriya children are taught right from birth to face difficulties in life with courage and happiness. Death, insult and injury must be faced with an open heart. She had that training, so she could follow the path of sacrifice in separation from her beloved Rama.

Naturally, as husband and wife they missed each other, but she did her dharma and he did his because he had different obligations to fulfil. As a husband his obligation was to his wife, but as a king and emperor his obligation was to his subjects. He had to decide which dharma to follow, the dharma to his wife or the dharma to his subjects. Rama was a very conscientious person; he renounced his personal dharma and accepted the community dharma. So Sita was sent away, not because she was bad but because of the prevailing social ethics.

Sita went to the forest where she lived in the ashram of Valmiki, which was a very renowned hermitage. There she gave birth to twin sons, Lava and Khusha. The two boys received the very best education in the ashram under the tutelage of Valmiki. Valmiki also wrote the first *Ramayana* during their stay in the ashram, because he knew the whole story. That *Ramayana* was written during Rama's lifetime itself and was sung to him in his court by his twin sons, whom he could not recognize. They were singing this Rama katha in the streets. Rama heard it and called them in and so they sang it to him. Of course, there are people who say, "No, he did wrong," but I feel that a man has to have some sort of discrimination and final judgement regarding his own dharma.

In those circumstances, if Rama was convinced of Sita's innocence, wouldn't it have been appropriate for him as an emperor to accept the voice of the people and at the same time abdicate and go away with her?

No, being a husband is a secondary dharma, being an emperor is a primary dharma. He was a king first and a husband next. I also have two dharmas: I am a sannyasin first and a guru next. If there is a crisis I will always look to my sannyasa dharma, not to my guru dharma, as I have done in most cases. When there is an acute dilemma about one's dharma in life, a person should follow the dharma which he thinks to be his very own. Sri Rama was a king first and foremost. *Rajadharma*, kingship, was his first dharma. His personal dharma of being a husband to Sita came next in priority.

There was a tussle about Sri Rama's dharma as a king and his dharma as a husband, and the rajadharma won over the personal dharma. So, he did no wrong in sending Sita to Valmiki's ashram. The talk that must have gone around amongst different people of those times is not recorded in word for word detail. Similarly, whatever must have transpired between Sri Rama and Sita is not documented either. The exchange which took place between husband

and wife remained a closely guarded secret till the end, so no light can be thrown on this part of the story.

All this is such ancient history that it is very difficult to maintain a clear and authentic version. For example, the Dwarika of five thousand years ago and the Nalanda of five hundred or a thousand years ago are not yet exactly located and fully explored. Similarly, in this ancient story one cannot really define how much is factual and how much is interpolated, how much has been added or deleted from the original text. But at least one event is definitely historical and that is Sita's long stay at Valmiki's ashram where she gave birth to the twin boys, Lava and Khusha.

How Sri Rama and Sita parted, what their parting words were, whether they fought and separated or compromised and had a mutual understanding before they parted, is not known. Maybe they decided that they had had enough of worldly life and the royal set up. Maybe they thought it was time for Sita to go into *vanaprastha ashrama*, to go away to the forest and lead a life of self-imposed austerity and service. Had they left the kingdom together, had Sri Rama abdicated his throne again for love of Sita, the story would have taken an entirely different turn, thereby implying a very different purpose and symbolism. Sri Rama's leaving the kingdom would have redefined the term dharma itself.

In Tulsidas' *Ramacharitamanas* Sri Rama and Sita's second separation has little or no significance, but in Valmiki's *Ramayana* it is given more importance. *Ramacharitamanas* is purely a spiritual book which was not intended just to tell the history of Rama alone, but to instil bhakti into the hearts of the people so that they would become more devoted to God. The purpose of the Valmiki *Ramayana* was to document the history of Rama. The background, the social and political circumstances and ethos were very peculiar when *Ramacharitamanas* was written. Firstly, Tulsidas wanted to awaken the people against Muslim misrule, but he also had to be very discreet and covert in his method. Therefore, he resorted to the figure of Sri Rama.

Secondly, the animosity between the Vaishnava and the Shaiva sects was so acute that in spite of Adi Shankaracharya's reforms, assigning a Shaiva priest in the temple of Sri Narayana, the differences were not settled. The intellectuals and the common people were still fiercely divided over the Shaiva-Vaishnava factions. Tulsidas found a way to end the differences and integrate the people into a cultural unity. He made Sri Rama and Shiva each other's devotees and ishta devatas. This artifice trickled right down to the grass roots and the masses accepted the ensuing harmony. Today we see the fruit of this. Sri Rama is worshipped in a Shiva temple and Lord Shiva is worshipped in Sri Rama's temple.

Actually the tradition and lifestyle of the three sects: Shaiva, Vaishnava and Shakta, are entirely different, but they are reconciled and there is a broadminded tolerance towards one another. Shaktas are non-vegetarians and drink liquor. Shaivas leave it to one's personal choice and Vaishnavas ask people to observe certain restrictions at certain places on certain occasions. Thus, there is moderation. Slowly a day will come when a Muslim will come into a Hindu temple as a priest. Neither a Prime Minister nor a Home Minister will ever be able to integrate the people culturally. No political party will ever accomplish this feat; only sadhus and sannyasins can do it.

The pulse of the people must be felt, their mood gauged and their desires assessed. This has to be done with sensitivity. What do people really want – war or peace? If people care for peace, then how can it be brought about? It was with this view that I built kutirs for Raghunath and Christ here. When priests and devotees are living in tattered huts, how can God live in a temple worth tens of millions of rupees? I told Raghunathji that I would construct a mud hut for him, so why not also install Christ in our ashram?

In India, each and every ashram, from Sivananda to Aurobindo, has Christians living in it. They shave their heads and live a dedicated life, so why can't their gods, saints and mahatmas be accepted? We want people of other faiths

to come to India for spiritual training, so what is the harm in accepting their great saints and god-men? Many people come here from abroad to learn Vaishnava dharma, Buddha dharma, then go back and propagate these faiths outside. If we accept their saints, nobody is going to object or make a disturbance about it.

The 'pop' generation of boys and girls today does not listen to anybody. They say religion is their private affair and they are free to choose and follow any religion they want. If they want to adopt Sri Rama as their God and sing His praises, they will, and you must just keep quiet. Such is their thinking and their retort. That is the mood and atmosphere in foreign countries. Christianity is a very strong religion in numerical terms.

The Christian population in the world is one billion and these people can adapt to eastern thought easily, because there is no clash between their spiritual experiences and ours. Only the terms differ, but the essence is the same. Their names for kundalini shakti and sushumna are different, but they refer to the same experiences. So we sadhus and sannyasins will bring about universal integration in our own way. That is why we do not transgress into politics. If we did, then our secret mission would be out and we do not want to spill the beans. However, there is no harm in telling you; it will make no difference.

What is the basis of the mantra Om Namah Shivaya?

You have to reflect on it. The study of *Om Namah Shivaya* is simple; it is based on the six sounds: Om, Na, Ma, Shi, Va and Ya. Each syllable has its own element, form and gravity. When you pronounce it orally, it has its own frequency. Each syllable also has a colour. This is true of any sound. It has a colour and a frequency; it is a wave, like a radio wave. I am speaking from here and you are listening from there. The sound is connected through the matrix of space. It goes through your ears and hits your brain, where the frequency takes some form or shape. If you study it, then you will know about Shiva.

Please tell us a short story about Shiva.

There are no short stories about Lord Shiva. If I talk about the descent of Ganga, it is a long story. If I explain how Shiva had a problem with his consort Sati in relation to Rama, it is a long story. If I tell you how Kamadev tried to break the meditation of Lord Shiva, it is a long story. If I tell you how Lord Shiva married Parvati, or how he narrated the whole *Ramacharitamanas*, the story of Rama, to Parvati, that is another long story.

The whole of the *Ramayana* that these people are reading is supposed to be Shiva's narration of Lord Rama's life to Parvati. Shiva asked her to sit down by his left side and said, "In your previous life you doubted this man and that is why you were punished. Now in this life I will tell you who he is. Please listen well to the story and leave aside all your doubts because Rama is my ishta devata, my Lord." So Shiva started telling Parvati the whole story of Rama's life from the time he was born. Shiva also said, "Whenever Rama is born I will go there and when he gets married I will attend the celebration." Perhaps he also said, "When Swami Satyananda observes Ram Naam Aradhana in Rikhia, I will go there and celebrate." I don't know whether this is written down in the *Ramayana* or not, but you should go and read it.

I have declared one bhajan to be the official bhajan of this festival. It is 'Sumirana kara le mere manaa'.

Oh mind, remember the name of the Lord.

You are living a wasteful life,

A life without meaning or purpose,

A life without remembrance of Him,

No matter what your accomplishments.

Just as an elephant without tusks,

A bird without wings, a well without water,

A life without remembrance of God is futile.

Just as a beautiful woman without a man,

A tree without fruit or the earth without water

Are non-productive and of no use to anyone,

Similarly, life without His remembrance is a waste.

*Try to eradicate passion, anger, ego and greed.
Serve good and saintly people.
Lead a purposeful, meaningful and rich life.
Remember God's name always.*

This is the sum and substance of the beautiful bhajan that everyone should keep in mind.

Satsang 20

December 18, 1996

Many people take vows and follow certain self-imposed disciplines. In the days when I accepted disciples, I imposed no rules upon myself, but now I have made three rules: not to preach, not to have disciples and not to accept donations or *dakshina*. There are many such self-imposed codes. This Alakh Bara where I live is a place of bhakti. Bhakti means love, it does not mean jnana. This is not a place for knowledge or erudition. You may listen to the *Ramayana* for one full hour. What is the result? There is no result. The dog's tail is as crooked as ever.

This place is of a very high order of spirituality; it is not like the local temple. Everyone should come here with love and for love. This area is extraordinary because it was here that Sati was cremated. It was here that her heart fell to the ground and was consigned to the fire. The limbs and other parts of Sati's body fell in different places, and each place became a *shaktipitha*, a centre of shakti, divine energy.

Spread of Buddhism in Southeast Asia

There are disciples here from South Korea and the name of their capital is Seoul, which means 'sun'. Even their national flag has a picture of the sun on it. Their country is very beautiful. They have beautiful temples and they serve

sadhus very well. When they see a sadhu and meet his eyes, they immediately lower their gaze and bow in humility. When I went there and met the people I soon developed a backache, as they did not stop bowing to me and I went on reciprocating by bowing to them in return!

Buddhism spread from India to the Far East via China and from there it went to Korea. Acharya Padma Sambhava was invited to the royal court by the Chinese emperor. He stayed there for some time and Sanskrit was taught in China. The Japanese also wanted to learn Sanskrit, but they did not wish to go to China as their relationship was not cordial, so they thought of coming all the way to India. Around this time Buddhism went from China to Korea and from Korea to Japan. In those times Korea was not divided into the North and South. The Japanese adopted Buddhism from the Koreans and then developed a special script to write Sanskrit, because in Sanskrit there are many different sounds which cannot be transcribed into the Japanese script.

The Japanese tried their best to come to India. First, traders tried to come, then sages, but they were unable to do so. As a last resort they made peace with China and had a political compromise in order to embrace and adopt Buddhism. Just as India and Pakistan are always at loggerheads there was great animosity between Japan and China, but they patched up their hostility. Then scholars and pundits began to travel from Japan to China to learn Sanskrit and bring the Buddhist faith back to their own country.

At that time many temples were erected in Southeast Asia to establish different ideals and deities of the Indian tradition. There were temples dedicated to Indra, Varuna, Bhavani and Marut. I have seen many of them. In those days the government of India was very powerful and it helped in the propagation of Indian spirituality and religion. Now the Indian government no longer supports religious movements. Spiritual propagation happens through the efforts of sadhus and mahatmas, not through political power and policy.

Every nation has had some indigenous philosophy and ideology of its own. There were definitely different traditions existing before Islam took over the Arab world. In Europe as well many religions existed before the advent of Christianity, which destroyed the indigenous spiritual traditions. In the same way, the Taoist and Confucian religions existed previously in China, and the Shinto religion in Japan. The mantra of the Shinto religion is *Om Namō Hirenge Kyo*. In China the mantra was *Om Mani Padme Hum*. Mani padma means 'the jewel in the lotus'. In these countries sadhus and mahatmas are greatly revered and people give them copious offerings. The monasteries and temples are very wealthy because the people pour in offerings. The sculpture in their temples and on the temple doors is very beautiful.

Is it true that martial arts originated in India and were taken to Southeast Asia during the reign of Emperor Ashoka?

Don't think that everything came from India. Every country has its own cultural speciality, its own characteristic art forms. In India we have martial arts in Kerala and in the northeastern region. In ancient times martial arts existed in all countries, but this led to an increase in fighting. Even a small provocation was enough to instigate a violent fight. People did not hesitate to cut off an opponent's nose or break his head without using a weapon at the slightest excuse. In India, therefore, martial arts were banned and became extinct.

How do you know so much about Korea and Japan?

I have been to Seoul, Tokyo, Kyoto, Kobe. I have also been to China, Russia and Norway, the land of the midnight sun. In Norway, the sun rises in the middle of the night. I have been there twice. If I had not taken sannyasa I would even have gone to the South Pole, because I like to travel. I have travelled in Japan, north to south and east to west. But now it is Swami Niranjan's turn. This place is the last stop for

me and I don't want to think about anything to do with this world. Now I only think about the atma, the Self. If we think about the atma, the Self, then when we die the next life will be a better one. This body is old now. I have maintained it well, but still it is old. Kabirdas has said,

*Kabirdas has used this body with care,
And tried to keep it clean,
But the body could not help getting tainted.*

The Korean and Japanese people place a lot of emphasis on *dhyana*, meditation. In Japan, *dhyana* became Zen. It is a distortion and a mispronunciation of the word *dhyana*, which is a Sanskrit word. In Pali it became Zen. The English also give their phonetic pronunciation to vernacular words. The Japanese and Korean people sit in *vajrasana* and go into meditation for long periods. They are habituated to sitting on the floor. Now this tradition is also spreading in Europe very fast. Because of the Buddhist background, *dhyana* and other forms of meditation are already widespread in Japan, Korea and all of Southeast Asia. The people there grasped easily whatever I spoke about on these matters. I did not have to explain anything to them. Our cultures are very similar.

Did you face a language problem in China?

In China there is such a variety of languages and dialects that it poses a problem for the Chinese themselves. In India also each state has its own language. India is multilingual. In India if a Bengali goes to Andhra Pradesh, he cannot follow Telugu, an Andhrite on a visit to Gujarat will follow nothing of the Gujarati language. Let a Gujarati visit Karnataka and he will not follow a single word in Kannada. China also has hundreds of spoken dialects. In India, not only the language but the clothes, lifestyle, culture, food and customs differ from state to state. India is not a nation, it is a federation of nations. China is a similar case.

Pakistan is also not a homogeneous nation. The states of Sindh, Baluchistan and Punjab differ from one another in

matters of food, dress, language and customs. The Sindhis eat koki, the Punjabis eat corn bread and green vegetables with mustard, whereas the Baluchis eat very thick rotis. The pattern of dress also differs. The Sindhis wear nothing on their heads, the Baluchis wear turbans. Thus, Pakistan, India and China are confederations of many nations.

What are the reasons for lack of progress in India?

In India, women do not work to earn money. They do household work worth about four or five hundred rupees per month. But if a girl is educated and works outside, she can easily earn four to five thousand rupees and can then afford four hundred rupees for a maid. Indian women do not work and, therefore, we do not have money. In Europe, every adult man or woman works and earns his or her livelihood and lives independently and separately.

In India only one member of the family earns to feed the rest of the family. When four people in a family work, they amass four times as much money, whereas when only one member of the family works, the income is very small. In Europe, parents ask their children to fend for themselves after a certain age. They tell their children to stand on their own two feet, so that the parents themselves can have a comfortable and carefree life in their old age. In India it is just the opposite, the responsibility increases in old age. A householder has to bear the burden of his wife, unmarried daughters and, later on, grandchildren as well. Then there is the added responsibility of a daughter-in-law.

Therefore, Europeans could rule the world, and they have left the stamp of their culture and civilization all over the world. Our own pattern of dress, the wearing of shirts and trousers, our food, the use of telephones and other devices, all reflect the influence of European culture. Civilization and culture do not progress because of the male population alone. Civilization progresses when both men and women contribute to it equally, and when there is one hundred percent literacy. In India the literacy rate is very low.

All over Europe there is one hundred percent literacy. If a child is not sent to school, the parents are penalized. The father and mother are held to be guilty if their children are uneducated. To allow a child to grow up illiterate is a crime in the eyes of the law, as is child labour. In Indian villages the children work. They are sent to the bazaar to buy vegetables; they clean utensils at home. This would amount to a crime in Europe, where they think that childhood is meant for education, schooling, and playing freely. But in India child labour is still rampant. If a child is stopped from going to school and from playing, how will he develop?

Lord Krishna was the most notorious prankster. He has left his name behind in history through his mischief, but what do we do? A child does a little mischief and we hit him, we ask him to be quiet. Swami Niranjana was very naughty as a child; there was no end to his mischief. Let a child be mischievous for three or four years till he learns what is good and what is bad. When Swami Niranjana was a small boy he dismantled my typewriter, tape recorder and cyclostyle machine. When I asked him what he was up to, he answered that he was learning to put it in order. Yes, he did learn that. Now he has no difficulty repairing his computer as well. He was able to learn this because I allowed him complete freedom in his childhood.

In Europe there is more technology and wealth because of education and freedom. They also do not keep boys and girls apart. When the male and female child both grow in the same womb, when both come into the world from the same pathway, why should they be separated? Indians have been set back due to gender bias. They have a different set of rules for boys and girls. A boy can come home after six p.m., he can talk to anybody, take a lift from anybody, but a girl is not allowed to do these things. As a result she remains ignorant and does not become worldly wise.

Another reason for our backwardness is the social compulsion of marriage. In Europe marriage is optional. I cannot imagine my own predicament had I married.

Either I would have been finished or the wife would have. Some people just do not have a suitable temperament for marriage. You must have certain qualifications of mind, body and wealth to make a success of marriage. When marriage is compulsory, a baby is born that inevitably will also need to be married after some years. If it is a daughter, the marriage requires a large sum of money as dowry. On the other hand, in Europe marriage is not a social obligation.

Our third mistake is our preservation of the caste system. This country underwent a total fall and regression because of the caste system. There are tens of millions of Muslim and Christian converts because of the caste system. Casteism has marred this country instead of making it. The situation gets a step worse because of the added element of untouchability. You touch a low caste person and you have to take a bath. Now, the twenty-first century is approaching, but still casteism and untouchability continue unabated in the villages and small towns. All this is the refuse of society.

Once I went to a bhakta's house. The old grandmother in the house observed untouchability. She washed the firewood brought by the woodcutter; she washed the clothes brought by the washerman before use. She had an educated son who was a lawyer. When I noticed this I immediately walked out of that house. You find a number of examples like this. As recently as 1950, in South India a person would buy things from a shop and leave the money on the counter. The shopkeeper would then wash the money before putting it in the box. Such customs continue to this day, but they are indications of our backwardness, not marks of progress.

How can real spiritual growth be recognized?

If I go to a shop to purchase a diamond, I will not be able to recognize a real one, but if an expert in diamonds goes to the shop, he will immediately recognize one. Similarly, a person who is spiritually evolved can recognize a real guru or adept. In our tradition all sannyasins have to shave except paramahamsas. Those who have the paramahamsa vritti and go into the avadhoota state are exceptions to this

rule. The other sannyasins perform ashram duties and look after the management. Some read books, some do japa. Some practise austerities and keep their beards, but the rest have to shave their heads. Some sannyasins keep a beard while living in the ashram, but that is wrong. It is against the sannyasin code, as they are neither avadhootas nor paramahamsas.

If someone is totally engrossed in material life and has not yet entered the spiritual path, will he still get good karma by offering a cow?

Life itself is spiritual, even if you don't meditate, remember God or donate a cow. Even if you do nothing, life itself is spiritual, because all life, not only human life, the life in trees, plants, insects, birds and so on is created by nature and by God. We learn through this life. We were animals, insects, birds, elephants, bulls, serpents and many things in our previous incarnations. In every life we learned something and then, ultimately, we became human beings. After becoming human beings, we created dharmas like bauddha dharma, sannyasa dharma, yoga or meditation. We created these dharmas so that we could progress faster; for example, I came from my village on foot and then took a car and went faster.

So, in human life we progress faster and faster because we have created a dharma, a law. Otherwise, to be honest, man does nothing. We are in the hands of a greater, divine power. Not only human beings but the entire cosmos is in the hands of a higher power and He leads us on and on. There is no place for free will or my will. Whether you give a cow or don't give a cow, it matters not.

There are many paths in spiritual life, so what is the best way to find our atma?

Serve mankind, help human beings who are sick, who are poor, who are bad, who want spiritual life, who want your love. Help animals, don't kill them. Your dharma is to do for others. Don't work much for yourself. Work for others.

When you work for others there is no karma, but when you work for yourself there is karma. So work for yourself a little bit, have a little food, clothes, a few facilities and comforts. But all your strength, buddhi, mind, heart and soul, all your money, knowledge, power, resources and friends should be for others. That is the easiest way.

I am telling you all this from my own experience because I have done everything. There is practically no form of spiritual life which I have not experienced, but my mind opened when I started living for others. As long as I was living for myself, I was blind. When I began to think about others – he is sick, he is poor, he has no home, poor man – I started growing inwardly. Now I'm not very far from my destiny. I am very close, almost there.

I have travelled through many countries and I have found that religion actually separates people from one another and troubles them greatly. So is religion really necessary?

Yes, religion is necessary, but to be more precise, dharma is necessary, not religion. Religion is a sect. Dharma means good karma, good thought, good action, good behaviour. Buddha only ate once a day. He wore two pieces of cloth and possessed only a mat and a bowl in which he kept rotis and dal. He had no ashram of his own, no wife and children. He always thought about others and asked all his disciples, “O bhikshus, move for the good of others, for the pleasure of others, for the compassion of others.”

What stage do we have to reach to attain enlightenment? Only a few humans are enlightened in this world, so when will the whole of humanity be enlightened?

The stage you have to reach is not wanting anything for yourself while living amongst millions of people. Of course, we wish for everyone to be enlightened, but this will not happen. The world is like an education system with innumerable levels. Not everybody becomes a university graduate at the same time. Some are in primary school, secondary school, college and a few are in university.

Suppose we don't try for spiritual life and we don't seek truth, we just go on living. Are we then living the wrong way?

No, you are still evolving but very slowly, like a snail. In everyone's life there is always movement. Life is never static, that is the law of nature. However, if you live a spiritual life, your progress will be fast. In India, we believe that before incarnating as a human being, we have already been through 8,400,000 lives. We have existed in the forms of amoeba, vegetation, insects, birds, reptiles, mammals, demons and other subhuman incarnations.

This human body is the last point in natural evolution. After this, our evolution will be mental, intellectual and spiritual. Having been through so many births, we must also have met each other in previous lives. We are not meeting for the first time. All of us gathered here must have met before. At least these sannyasins must have met me in my previous life in some form or other. Now that I have completed my karma, perhaps they have come to say bye bye.

The universe, in fact, is very small. In this small universe there is a small planet Earth. On this small planet Earth there is a small area called Asia. In that small Asia there is the small country of Korea. In that small country of Korea there is a small city, Seoul. In that small city there is a small neighbourhood. In that small neighbourhood there is a small house. In that small house there is a small man. Just think about it.

Now where are you and I in that map? We are like atoms and molecules meeting each other, like time and space. I am positive energy and you are negative. I am plus and you are minus. In this universe there are two poles, time and space, travelling toward each other and meeting at one point in the nucleus. They are represented as Purusha and Prakriti. Man is Purusha and woman is Prakriti. Man is Shiva and woman is Parvati. In this world there are two principles: Shiva and Parvati, the male and female aspect. In every form of existence there is a positive and a negative pole, even in

minerals, herbs, trees and animals. Everywhere you see the duality of Prakriti. As a matter of fact, you also have these two poles within you.

Sometimes I also begin to wonder, do we really exist at all? If somebody says, "Point to where Swami Satyananda is on this map," he can't be seen. Where is your place in this vast universe? In this infinite universe of infinite suns, moons, stars, galaxies and planets, where is your place and where is my place? What is your dimension and what is my dimension? Ego is the dimension of 'I', that's all. Because you have an ego, 'I-ness', therefore you are.

So, we are not meeting for the first time. None of us is meeting for the first time. We have met each other many times, not necessarily as human beings. Maybe once upon a time I was a frog in this well and you were a frog in that well. Maybe I was a bird and you were a falcon, I was a snake and you were a mongoose, I was a tiger and you were a deer, or I was a blade of grass and you were a flower. Life is infinite and eternal. It is beyond all experience, beyond all explanations.

We are talking about it, but we can't actually describe it because the whole thing is a mystery. Who created it? When did he create it? Why did he create it? Did he actually create it at all? That is the last question: did he create it? Can we know whether something is created or not? Perhaps we are all dreaming. A long, fine dream is going on. A mahatma is sitting there, a disciple is sitting here, another mahatma is sitting there, and they are all laughing and joking. When the dream ends there is nothing. This life is a long dream. The whole world is a long dream. Everything is a dream, but we don't know it. So, as long as you are dreaming, dream nice things.

There is a story told in the Middle East. A Muslim priest was sleeping. He dreamt that he went to God in heaven. God said, "Oh, Maula sahib, please come and sit down here." God made him sit down and then brought rose water and sprinkled it over him. Then God said, "I am going to bring a goat for you." So, God went inside to bring the

goat and, in the meantime, the maula's wife came and said, "Hey, get up!" The maula's dream was immediately broken, and he cried out, "Wait, God is bringing a goat for me! By waking me, you have incurred such a big loss. Had the goat been brought I could have sold it in the bazaar for one hundred rupees!" Now tell me, what was dream and what was reality?

Proper perspective on karma

Whatever karma we do must have a spiritual purpose. Now look, these people are in charge of seating the guests. Their primary duty is to see who is coming and where they should sit, but if they get involved in kirtan they are making a mistake in their karma. The guests are appointed to enjoy the music, but those who are seating them are not. They are appointed to see that the guests are seated properly. So, we must have a proper perspective on karma.

Every karma, every action, has an equal and opposite reaction. Only the karma that you do for others has no reaction, either equal or opposite. But any karma you do for yourself, for your family, for your dear ones, has an equal and opposite reaction. Any karma you do for others who are not yours, who are totally foreign to you, unknown strangers whose names you don't even know, that action has no reaction. It will purify your heart and make you pure. That is what happened to me. The more I am aware of others, the more I am aware of Him. A day might come when I will be aware only of them, and then I will become aware of Him alone.

Realize the truth

Worship of humanity is worship of God. The first pre-condition of sadhana, of spiritual endeavour, is to recognize the misery, suffering and needs of humanity. Meditation is a good thing. It is also a necessity, but as long as there is only selfishness in your heart, the cork of the bottle will remain forever sealed. Go on pouring water into the bottle and the bottle will never get filled. As long as the cork is

fixed in the mouth of the bottle, how can the bottle fill with water? The water will just flow off. But the one whose heart is open, who is selfless, who thinks that all he has belongs not to himself but to God, will ultimately come to realize the truth.

Whatever you have has been given to you by God. It has not been given by your father, forefathers, relatives, government or employer. When you come to realize this truth, you will see that whatever your assets may be, they are meant for the benefit of others and not just yourselves. The whole world is one family unit. When you realize this, what place will the government hold in your life? The gods themselves will then descend upon the earth to make your world a heaven. This should happen. As long as man's heart is not open to the suffering, woes and miseries of other people, to the privations of the 'have-nots', all his sadhana goes to waste, just like pouring water into a corked bottle. Therefore, whatever I do or wish to do for the service of others is with the purpose of washing my own linen. I want to purify myself. Selfless service acts as a detergent and cleans the tainted karma. It washes away the dirt of karma.

A man of women

In my heart there is a big place for the mother, the beautiful creation of God. I feel kindness and also affinity for the mother, *daya* and *maya* both. What is there to hide? I have no secrets. Whatever I am is an open secret. Everybody, not only in Munger but internationally, knows my weakness for women. They know about this soft corner of mine in England and America as well. Some call me a man of women, like Sri Krishna.

The people of our country must understand one fact. The fall of India is entirely because the left half remains weak and ineffective. The female side is paralysed and has developed debility. What do our women do? They pick up cow dung, sweep and wash. They bear children and get beaten. What do our men do? They chew betel leaf, drink, chase other women, disappear from home night after night,

then visit the temple and worship Kali and Durga. Bravo for the men! Everybody has to dedicate themselves to the task of uplifting women, of helping them on the path of progress. Let society condemn and criticize you for this. Somebody has to bell the cat. So I am that rat who is belling the cat.

Satsang 21

December 19, 1996

Happiness should arise from within. Money alone does not bring happiness. Money is an external aspect of life and happiness is an internal aspect. Many people are scared of sannyasa. I fail to understand what there is to fear. Probably people wonder who will cremate them after death if they take sannyasa. Sannyasa life does not have the complications of ordinary life. Our life is very simple and happy. A thousand people are being fed here and I don't even have to lift my little finger. Swami Satsangi is managing everything and Swami Niranjan from Munger is here. We sannyasins are all happy. Is anybody looking after us?

The Koreans and Japanese all observe something like *shraadh*, purification rites for departed ancestors, and it is much better than our system. They respect their forefathers who have departed. When someone dies, the body is burnt and the ashes kept in a wooden box. They give the box to their priest who keeps it in the monastery and the name goes in a register. Once a year they take it out, perform worship, beat the gong, then put it back again. After twelve years they dispose of it in the ocean. In their tradition, a guru is necessary. Every tradition has a monastery and every monastery has a guru. They also have the system of a family priest, like the *kula guru*, who can be married.

Marital relationship and spirituality

Rishi Vashishtha was married to Arundhati and Rishi Agastya to Lopamudra. Vedic religion saw nothing wrong in a man and woman living together. The sannyasa system was brought in later by Buddhism and Jainism. Then a man's spiritual life was considered to be in jeopardy if he was married and lived with his wife and child. But originally in Indian thought, marriage was taken to be the normal course of life. There was no discord between marriage and spiritual life because the cohabitation of a man and woman was said to have no connection with their spiritual life.

This thinking changed after the Greek invasion. First Greece left its mark on Indian thought, then came Islam and Christianity. From then on, the relationship between a man and woman took on a negative association. A taboo was placed on marital relations because they were considered sinful. Everyone is born of sin. The only honourable exception is Jesus himself, who was born of a virgin mother. His birth was immaculate. However, marital life is not a sin. The relationship between a man and woman is not a hindrance on the spiritual path because it is natural. It is God-made, not man-made like a social or government law.

So, the law of God became wrong and the law of man became right. Whatever God made was sinful and the decree pronounced by Buddha, Mahavir, Christ and Mohammed was meritorious. If marriage was sinful and degrading, why did the Lord himself get married? He should have remained a bachelor, like me. But Lord Rama was not a bachelor and Lord Krishna has broken a record. He not only married but also loved women. Lord Rama had no time to love or even to talk to Sitaji. He had to be content with just watching his spouse, but Lord Krishna enjoyed everything. You all know the stories of his love exploits. If Lord Krishna was sinful and indulged in sinful activities, then why is he worshipped and accepted as God?

The relationship between a man and woman is sanctified and accepted in the form of marriage in order to prevent chaos and disorder in society. Suppose you just start living

with any woman, what will happen to your property then? What law can govern property matters in that case? The law should have some basis; it must follow the norms of society. Therefore, the relationship between a man and woman has been legalized as marriage. Otherwise, even without marriage, the relationship between a man and woman still exists. But marriage was made lawful in order to prevent any confusion, so that there would be no room left for socio-economic mess.

Rishi Agastya and Lopamudra were not married. She was the daughter of Rishi Bharadwaj whom Lord Rama and Bharata had later met in Prayag on their way to Chitrakoot. Lopamudra had desired to stay with Vishwamitra as his wife, but he rejected her. Then she lived with Agastya out of wedlock, but he was still held in very high esteem. After his coronation Lord Rama went to meet Agastya. The Lord waited for him to come out of samadhi in order to have his darshan. So you can imagine the prestige and status Agastya enjoyed in the eyes of Rama, who was himself a great emperor.

Therefore, living together as man and wife has nothing to do with spirituality. Spirituality relates to spirituality alone. One who works with gold is a goldsmith, one who makes shoes is a cobbler and one who works with metal is a blacksmith, regardless of whether he is white or black, brahmin or shudra, Hindu or Muslim.

Hanuman is considered to be the perfect disciple. Can you tell us some stories to illustrate the qualities that make him so?

Hanuman was not a disciple of Rama. He was a minister in the cabinet of King Sugriva. But he had a premonition that one day Rama would come in search of Sita while he was in exile. So he was waiting for that day. From the time Hanuman met Sri Rama near the Rishyamuka hill, he served him under the orders of Sugriva. The most striking things about Hanuman were his physical strength, intelligence and devotion to duty. He was a very capable man.

Hanuman was born near Nasik in Maharashtra, very close to Trayambakeshwar. From childhood he was so strong that he could lift an elephant as if it were a ball. Hanuman was Rama's trusted friend, but since he had a devotional attitude and manner in relation to Rama, people think that he was his disciple. He considered himself the servant of Rama. A disciple or servant must have one quality, absolute surrender. When you turn the steering wheel to the right, the car moves to the right. If you turn the steering wheel to the left and the car moves to the right, then there is something wrong with the car. When the guru tells you to do something, you have to do it. That was the quality of Hanuman and he had great faith.

In Japan an animated film has been made about *Ramayana*. The Japanese people hold Rama and Sita in very high esteem and admire the ideals personified by them. The traditional values have degenerated in Japan with the modern times, so they researched all the sources in order to restore them. In the *Ramayana* they found values and ideals that could be given to their children as models of conduct. So they turned to India, the source of the *Ramayana*. Films have already been produced on the *Ramayana* and Sri Hanuman, and more are being made.

The word *hanu* means 'chin', so Hanuman means 'he who has a prominent chin'. Chin here refers to *jalandhara bandha*, the chin lock, which is a yogic practice. Hanuman's duties, accomplishments and achievements are all feats of yoga, whether he was flying in the sky, leaping across the ocean or burning the city of Lanka. All his actions and miracles are not the deeds of a wrestler or a muscleman, they are yogic siddhis, manifestations of yogic power.

No muscleman can fly, cross the ocean in one leap, lift a mountain, or burn a city. Only a person who has perfected yoga could do all these things. Hanuman was a great yogi. His name relates to *jalandhara bandha*, a practice that awakens the prana vayu for which he was so famous. Being a master of prana he could change his form and increase the dimensions of his body. In fact it was said that he was an

aspect of Shiva. So, when Lord Rama was born, Shiva was born as Hanuman. Vishnu was born as the avatar Rama and Hanuman is also an avatar of Shiva.

Every now and then one has a dilemma in life about what is dharma and what is adharma. What can one do until one realizes a stage of discrimination?

When there is confusion about right and wrong, one should go to the guru. But if one has no guru, he should assist the helpless and practise compassion. Then his heart will be clean, his atma will be clean and he will be able to decide what dharma and adharma are. These are the two ways.

I have three paths of yoga sadhana before me. Could you please advise which is best for me.

Everyone should be his own pathfinder. You can consult others, hear their suggestions, exchange ideas and thoughts. At least you have some Vedic samskaras, since you were born in a particular caste. These other people have no samskara, so they have a tougher task. All Indians, be they male or female, have inherited some kind of samskara, whether they are born in a brahmin, kshatriya or any other family. After all, a baby rat knows how to make a burrow, even without training. You are all the offspring of rats and you know instinctively how to dig your burrows. This is your advantage.

A householder must understand clearly that the whole of life is a sadhana in itself. Everybody is a sadhaka. He may or may not do his pooja, he may or may not believe in God, he may or may not be religious, but still he is trying to perfect his life in some way or other, and this is nothing but sadhana. Even animals like the horse and the snake are doing their sadhana. Sadhana means trying to perfect, to improve yourself.

This is not your first entry into life. You have already evolved through 8,400,000 species of living beings. You were a bacteria living in vegetables, an insect living in faeces and cow dung, then you became a bird, then a reptile, then a

rodent, then a dog and then a donkey. That is why people abuse each other saying, “You worthless dog”, or “You dirty rat”. In fact, you have been through these species. In each of the lower species you learned to develop your instincts. Beyond instinct there is intellect and intuition, which are human qualities. All other creatures live by instinct, but man lives by intellect as well as instinct. When man advances in his self-development, then he lives by intuition. These three are the basis of progress and self-development: intuition, intellect and instinct.

You have already passed through many grades of life and then through the 8,400,000 species. Hereafter the body stops evolving. Nature halts physical evolution at the human body and continues at the consciousness level. Your awareness and intellect will evolve now. Sri Aurobindo has explained conscious evolution very vividly. Hereafter it will be awareness of mind, intellect and consciousness. The process is internal and invisible. It is that awareness which sees forms and colours, hears sounds, feels happiness and unhappiness.

You are listening to me and you also know that you are listening to me; this is evolution, expansion of awareness. This knowledge is absent in the animal kingdom. An animal also eats, but it does not know that it is eating. An animal breeds but without self-consciousness. An animal’s behaviour is purely instinctive, but it is not so with humans. I am listening to you and I am also aware of this act of mine. Then one day the awareness just gets detached from its actions. Whatever one does, one sees it, just as I am watching your face, your complexion, your hair, your facial expressions and so on. I am your witness. Consciousness expands into witnessing awareness when the time is ripe. If this happens prematurely it is detrimental to your mental balance. If you develop that witnessing awareness, *sakshi bhava*, just now, you will get frightened. It comes about after a very long period of mental development.

This path of self-evolution needs to be trodden alone. You have to walk this path on your own. I always think

about what man can do for his own development, how he can best help himself. You can consult society and abide by its norms in the external affairs of life, such as eating, clothing and so on, but in spiritual matters you bow only to God; you are guided only by the divinity above. God gives you the right intelligence. God resides within everyone. God occupies the seat of the heart within all living beings. God, through His maya, puts you on the merry-go-round of this world. He makes you rotate round and round on the wheel of time. Through maya itself God shows you your spiritual path.

Spiritual life should not be a matter of ego – “I will do this, I will meditate, I will do so many million rounds of japa, I will speak the truth, I will observe brahmacharya, I will observe . . .” Oh, what nonsense is this ego! It is better to say, “God, tell me what I should do, whether I should meditate or serve the sick or enjoy life.” You see, spiritual guidance has to come from God. Sometimes it comes, but you don’t understand God’s ways, God’s clues. At that time you need a guru to decipher God’s signals to you.

Therefore, you must have a guru. Guru is not a priest. Guru is just like your mother. I will not say guru is like your husband. The relationship between husband and wife is qualified. It does not have the intrinsic intensity of the mother-child relationship. Guru is like your mother because the relationship between a mother and child is more intimate than the relationship between a husband and wife. When the relationship between guru and disciple is like that between mother and child, it becomes very close and intimate. The relationship between mother and child is the deepest bond in this world. The relationship between guru and disciple should be the same. Then you can understand whatever the guru tells you and it is God’s instructions conveyed to you through him. Gurus are the interpreters.

You should never be in a hurry regarding spiritual life, because most people nowadays have the habit of being in a hurry. You are impatient. You want to propose and get married the same day, then have a child and educate him

as fast as possible. You start a business and the next day you expect to make a million rupees profit. When you begin your job, you want a promotion with an increment the next day. Spiritual life is not a matter of one life, just as education is not a matter of one year. If you want to become a medical graduate, it takes fifteen or sixteen years. Spiritual evolution goes on over many lifetimes. What is one life? Seventy to eighty years is one life. Eighty years is nothing in relation to time, it's like the blinking of an eye.

Do you remember the statement of Kakabhushundi in the *Ramayana*? You close your eyes for a fraction of a second and when you open them, the universe, *Brahmanda*, the egg of Brahma, has already changed four times along with its creator, Brahma. Millions and millions of years have passed. So there is no absolute definition for time. Time is a relative factor. The life span of a human being may be a millennium for an ant. During that period an ant will be born and will die hundreds of times, while a man will just reach the age of eighty. Similarly, a span of eighty years is a very long time for a frog; it would be born two hundred times during that period.

There is a different concept of time on every planet and in every sphere of life, so never be in a hurry. You should realize the relativity of time in this birth, in this life. You should never aim for instant achievement in spiritual life, but for long-term practice. Go on practising and don't worry about the accomplishment. Don't worry about what you will and what you won't get.

How can music be practised as a sadhana?

Music is a faculty in all creatures. Even an ass brays and a sparrow twitters. Music is the best form of sadhana; there is no higher form. Everyone can practise music as a sadhana, but this does not mean singing or playing for others in order to be appreciated. God is your best listener. When you sing for the appreciation of others they listen, but God doesn't. Music becomes a sadhana when you practise in solitude for an hour early in the morning. Music sadhana includes sitar,

flute and other instruments, as well as vocal. It isn't necessary to have a melodious voice for vocals. God wants to hear music, not your sweet voice.

What is the early morning music in the family? The husband shouts at the wife, the wife shouts back. The mother-in-law yells and someone else wails. If someone takes up music seriously and begins the day with music sadhana in the early morning, people will say, "What an idea Swamiji has planted inside his head! As the day breaks, we are woken up with Saaaaaaa..." Therefore, I stopped giving instructions regarding music sadhana. So many complaints were made about the early morning practice sessions that I stopped telling people to get up at five a.m. in the morning.

I do not tell people what Swami Sivananda used to say about early morning sadhana, because anything that is suggested becomes a readily accepted excuse to start a fight. If everybody in the family drinks or if they all play cards, there is no problem. But if a family member wears geru and practises singing or chanting in the early morning, a big commotion arises and tempers begin to flare. If you do anything good it creates trouble. However, when you indulge in the most unworthy things, there is no adverse reaction!

If you wear geru, shave your head and begin the morning with a bhajan, there is instant ranting and raving and everything goes out of gear. One should be free to wear geru at least for one day. In the world people pick fights because they enjoy quarrelling. They can't digest their food if there is no fighting in the family. This is a fact, so I don't advise people. Let people do what they want. I know that even if nobody does anything about anything, the world will still go on.

Everybody is moving towards God, the good man as well as the bad. The honest man is heading towards the Divine and so is the crook. The only difference is in the method. Everybody moves according to their nature and temperament. The whole of life is a sadhana, so there is

nothing which is not sadhana, and nobody less than God Himself is having us do this sadhana. He is making us move around and around the wheel of life.

Can we develop the guru-disciple relationship while living at home with our husband or wife?

Just as the relationship between mother and child is intrinsic, so is the relationship between guru and disciple. However, another problem will crop up when you establish the connection with guru. The husband or wife will come in the way of your relationship with the guru and there will be the inevitable triangle of relationships. When only one of the spouses becomes a disciple, the other makes trouble. If the husband takes to a guru and the wife does not, she grudges the relationship. If the wife seeks the guru and the husband does not, the husband frets and frowns.

How can the natural environment be protected by people who have the will to do so, but who continually have to fight with opposing forces?

You don't have to worry about nature because nature takes care of itself. If man doesn't protect nature and destroys it, then nature will punish him. Nature is an intelligent force. You don't have to worry about it. Nature is more intelligent than man and it will take care of itself. But if man violates the laws of nature, nature will punish him.

What is your view on marriage? Do you think it should be compulsory for all young people to marry?

I think whether one lives a married life or a bachelor's life should be optional, not compulsory. First of all, an amendment should be made in the social system so that marriage becomes optional, not compulsory. There was a time when marriage had to be compulsory, but now men and women have become independent. People have developed discrimination, *viveka*. They can decide what they want to do. They don't need their father to tell them. In this case, marriage should be optional because whether one is a married man

or a bachelor has nothing to do with spiritual life. You can be spiritual whether you are a bachelor or not.

If one remains a bachelor, should he keep his virginity?

In my personal opinion, virginity is a mental block. Certain hormones are produced during sexual interaction and if they are blocked, intelligence does not increase. One is unable to think broadly or about many things. So, in that sense virginity is a block.

How is our food digested and utilized for spiritual sadhana?

It is none of your business. Your duty is limited to eating according to the rules of health. You should chew your food well. Try to chew each mouthful twenty-four or thirty-two times. Do not eat chillies and have some reasonable dietary restrictions, that's all. Do not concern yourself with how the food will be digested. Similarly, you need not worry about how blood will form or how bones will be made, that is the function of nature.

You just go on with your pooja. Whenever nature wants to bless you with samadhi she will, or she may choose not to do so at all. Your duty is to do your pooja with one-pointed awareness and without distraction. When you ask questions there is distraction. Even if I explain things to you, that will not help you to become one-pointed. But if your mind becomes too one-pointed, that will land you in the mental asylum. After all, a focused mind is found only in very few people whose number you can count on your fingertips.

Such mahatmas do not come in multiples. Only the rarest among the rare gets the vision of light. When time, space and object become one, there is a phenomenal explosion. Such a man has the strangest experiences, which defy description. That man can burst into tears, it is such a unique experience. Therefore, God has locked that experience away from our view. There is a double lock on it. If you want to open it, there is a particular code which only God and gurus know. One key to this lock is with God

and one key is with the guru. They unlock it together. They decide it together, just like they do with the nuclear bomb or with a bank lock. But opening this lock is not so simple. Kabir Das has said, "I am the slave of those saints who have conquered their mind."

So you had better forget about making the mind one-pointed. Undivided concentration of the mind on the form of God is a very difficult task and it is also dangerous. There are two paths of sadhana, the path of faith and the path of one-pointed concentration. The path of faith is easier and better. To make the mind one-pointed is the hardest task. Therefore, do your pooja with full faith. When you have faith, there is no need to make the mind one-pointed. When the mind becomes one-pointed, certain powers or siddhis arise which distract the sadhaka. Not only the ordinary man, even sadhus and sages go completely astray. Once siddhis arise it is very difficult to stop them from affecting the mind and brain. There are many stories about siddha sadhus who get beaten or end up behind bars. It is better not to get entangled in this because once the mind becomes one-pointed, many strange and abnormal things begin to happen.

Therefore, God and maya, Mother Nature, have put a big lock on the emergence of siddhis and the key is not available. If you have the key, hand it back to me. Whatever devotional practice you are doing, pooja, burning incense, do it regularly at a fixed hour for whatever duration you can manage, whether an hour or merely fifteen minutes. I take five minutes to do my pooja of mother Tulsi and during that time my mind becomes one-pointed. Tulsiji is my mother, my ishta devi. It is not necessary that I have a one-pointed mind when I worship and pray to her because I have faith, and that faith yields its due fruit to me.

I have never fallen sick in life, not even for a day, and this is my agreement, my pact with mother Tulsi. She keeps my body fit so that I am able to continue my practice without any interruption. My practice is not a brief one that ends in two or three days. It goes on continuously. Therefore, even

a small sickness like a headache or cold can come in the way. But I prayed to Tulsiji from the bottom of my heart and she has fully responded to my prayer. I received what I asked for due to *shraddha*, faith. The best sadhana in this age is to do one's pooja with deep faith. There is no risk at all in this type of sadhana.

What is shraddha and what does it mean?

One is born with shraddha, with faith in one's heart. When you were born, shraddha too was born in you at the same time. Can you prove who your father is? When your mother tells you who your father is, you accept it and take him to be your father. You never questioned who your father is because of faith. So, faith and belief are inborn in man, they are inherent in his disposition. You do not have to purchase these things from outside, like you buy consumer items.

Faith does not change. The intellect changes, the brain changes. You can see things because your eyesight is unobstructed, but you can't see when there is a veil before your eyes. This veil is produced by intellect, never by faith. Faith never wanes; it is deathless, eternal. It is inborn in you; it comes with you and stays with you. It is an aspect of Shiva-Parvati. Shraddha is the goddess Bhavani herself. Without faith you are blind. Shraddha is the self-sustaining form of God. It is its own end.

Did the ocean-churning episode really take place?

Yes, of course it took place, but you must understand which ocean it refers to. In our Puranas there are many stories which are symbolic as well as factual narratives, for example, when Lord Rama was born, when Sita was married to him, when the Mahabharata war was fought, on what day it started, when the *Bhagavad Gita* was told to Arjuna. All these things are written about in such a way that only a real knower, a real genius who is capable of decoding them with a penetrating intellect, can understand them.

In many places the names of rishis and munis are mentioned. However, these names do not refer to actual

persons but to particular constellations, *nakshatras*. The position of the planets and the constellations of stars is determined by astronomical calculation. On the basis of this calculation, dates and chronologies are determined. For example, the constellation of Saptarishi, which is a cluster of seven stars, takes one hundred years to complete one orbit and when completed, it comes back to the same zodiac sign.

Therefore, when the Saptarishis are mentioned in the context of a narration, the definite time of the event is calculated. On the basis of this calculation, six or seven thousand years may pass during the Saptarishis' movement. In the shastras and Puranas they would not write that the Saptarishis were in that particular zodiac position; they would write that the Saptarishis came to meet. Met from where and in which place? It implies that the Saptarishis united in that particular zodiac position. By calculating this position, the exact year, time and day of the event is obtained. Astronomers have a thorough knowledge about these things. Thus the chronology of the Mahabharata war, its beginning and end, the time when *Bhagavad Gita* was taught are ascertained.

There is also the mention of visits by different gods and goddesses, Kuber, Marut and such deities, which actually refers to the astronomical chart of that time. Our ancestors were perfect masters in this field. It is described figuratively as flowers being showered down from the heavens above. Similarly, in astrological idiom it says that 'Rahu is watching the Moon', which means that they are both in the same house of Brihaspati or Jupiter. 'Mangal or Mars has come to the house of Sani or Saturn' is a similar expression, which signifies astrological mathematics.

What has been written in the puranic stories are actually indications of the time, just like our calendars. Previously, however, people had no understanding of these pointers. The Vedas are said to date back about two to two and a half thousand years. However, an American scholar, Arthur Bersdal Keats, who has written two books on Indian

philosophy, *Religion of the Vedas* and *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, mentions an event in the Vedas that took place forty-five thousand years ago, dated back from the Christian calendar of today. When this calculation was verified by astronomical mathematics, it was said to be accurate.

Today astronomical calculations can definitely predict events like an eclipse twenty thousand years ahead of its actual occurrence. Dates can be fixed for events, which occurred in the very remote past when the human species was not yet born. Even scientists have accepted the validity of these calculations. The ancients described the planets in anthropomorphic terms, as humans. For example, the sun is pictured on a splendid chariot, driving seven horses across the sky. There is an incident in the *Mahindra Stotra* where it is said that Brahma was enamoured of his own daughter, Saraswati, and began to chase her. What does this really mean? Is it a factual incident? What is the narrator trying to convey? Is he trying to tell us the exact time of the incident? Is it an inner occurrence or an outer event? Is it history or metaphor?

All the events, which form part of our ancient tradition, have now been determined in their chronological order. Definite dates have been discovered as to when the *Bhagavad Gita* was narrated, what day and at what time it was given. These are not conjectural references, but exact, clear cut assertions. What was the date of Rama's birth? Rama was born in Chaitra. These days the month of Chaitra corresponds with March/April, but when Rama was born Chaitra corresponded with the month of December. Why this disparity? Because the month calculated by the orbit of the sun and by the orbit of the moon are not the same. There is always a difference of some days. In addition, there is the extra month or some other ground for adding or subtracting days from a month. So, every hundred years there will be a considerable difference in the calendar of the universe.

Time is relative, not absolute. All the terms used to denote time: seconds, minutes, hours, dawn, dusk, midday, forenoon, afternoon, night, day, week, month, year and

century are based on mathematics. Time is related to object. Time, space and object are intricately interrelated. However, these three can be separated, which is what happens in nirvikalpa samadhi. In that state nothing of this trio survives. Therefore, in the ancient literature of the Puranas, time has been personified as gods and goddesses, or represented as planets, stars or constellations. According to their configuration and metaphorical representation, time is calculated and the exact dates and times are fixed.

Many dates have been determined by the joint studies of scholars and pandits. In this way, the dates of Lord Krishna's birth, the Mahabharata war, and the expounding of the *Bhagavad Gita* are determined with certainty. Even the *Ramacharitamanas* gives these dates. The method of citing a date as 5th December 1996 was unknown in those ancient times. They had a different method of counting days and measuring time. They had a very complicated calendar whereas today the method is very simple. In those days the time and place would be mentioned, and that was correct because the time in India is different to the time in England. The time in England is a few hours behind that of India. Thursday in India is Wednesday in America. Everybody has to adjust their watches after crossing the International Date Line.

America corresponds to the region called Patala in the Puranas. This was supposed to be the domain of Ahiravana, Mahiravan and Bali. Therefore, time also depends upon locality. This explains the ancient Indian calendar system in which the locale was mentioned along with the time. If you are making a sankalpa in America, you cannot just repeat like a parrot, *Jambudveepe, Bharatavarsh, Aryavarte*, as it would not be appropriate in a foreign land. Similarly, you have to adjust the dates and the time differences of the two countries. Once I went to England where a pandit was pronouncing the sankalpa using the word 'Aryavarte'. I brought it to his notice that he was uttering the sankalpa in England and not in India so he should change the wording accordingly.

In Madras I once met a pandit from Garhwal. He repeated the classical sankalpa without thinking of the changed locale. He was referring to Rishikesh in the sankalpa, when actually he was pronouncing it in Madras. The Indian subcontinent is divided into different energy fields, different areas having different names. The astrologers know these divisions and make use of them in their expertise. Time, even in the same country, differs from area to area, at least by a few minutes, as the stretch of land is very extensive. The time difference between Delhi and Pakistan is very little, whereas the difference between Delhi and Calcutta is much more, although they are both in the same country. We refer to Indian Standard Time offhand, but the local time in each place differs slightly, at least by a few minutes.

Will you talk about Christ and Shiva? What were the similarities and differences in their missions?

There is no similarity. The church will not accept what I say, but intellectuals will appreciate it because I have read almost all the books on Christ that there are. Christ was born in Israel. His forefathers had migrated from Kashmir to Israel, via Iraq, due to certain political circumstances. They always talk about the land of milk and honey. Kashmir is that land, not Israel. Israel is a land of desert and heat; there is not much milk and honey there.

There was an Essene monastery very close to the birth-place of Christ. The word 'Essene' has two meanings, *ishana* or *sannyasi*, but scholars say it is *ishana*. *Ishana* is the name of Shiva. So the Essenes were a sect devoted to Shiva. It is a well-known fact that Shaivite sects flourished in Europe once upon a time, because in the Vatican library I have seen a shivalingam from the Eritrean region, which was where they got their shivalingams. It is in the Vatican and you can see it there.

When Christ was a boy, he joined that sect of *Ishana* or Essenes, according to the documents called the Dead Sea Scrolls. Many scrolls written by the Essenes were found in the

area around the Dead Sea. Christ visited the Essene monastery and asked the monks many questions which they answered, but they could not reply to certain things. Ultimately, they sent him to India. There is proof that he came here. He went to Puri and witnessed the Rath Yatra there. He visited Nepal. He stayed in the Hamish monastery in Ladakh and in the library of that monastery there is a written document about his life in India.

Christ lived in India for thirteen years. If you study the Bible carefully, there is no reference to Christ for thirteen years. When he returned from India, he brought two philosophies with him. The first was Buddhism: right living, ethics, contemplation – *dharma*, *achara*, *vichara*. The second was Vaishnavism: bhakti, surrender to God. So, he took dharma and bhakti with him and started preaching them in Israel. For that reason he was crucified, but he did not die on the cross. He survived and was taken away by his friends, devotees and disciples.

Christ left Israel and went to Italy, Turkey, Iraq and then came back to Kashmir, thirteen years after the crucifixion. He came with his mother and his friend, Mary Magdalena; the three came together. By that time he had grown old and he didn't preach in India. He died in Srinagar and his tomb, which is known locally as Isu Asaf or Nabi Asaf, is still there today. The word *nabi* means prophet. There is also another tomb there called Marium. In India we say Mariam instead of Mary. This is all documented and you can read about it in books.

The caretaker of the tomb is a very strict Muslim. Many scholars from Europe and Australia, some of whom I know personally, have been there. They offered money and asked to see the manuscript pertaining to the last years of Christ in Kashmir. However, the caretaker, being a Muslim, would not take the money. He would not surrender the manuscript that was kept there. One of my friends visited there after meeting with me and came back, saying, "He wouldn't accept money." For a Muslim, dharma is more important than money.

So, the connection with Shiva could be the association of Christ with the Essenes. The other connection I can see is the austere life he lived. He was a total renunciate and would eat, sleep and meditate anywhere. That was more in line with Shiva because he is not particular about these things. Ganesha is very tip-top, but Shiva does not care about decent living. He lives in a very carefree, wild manner. He eats anything that is offered to him, including intoxicants, and he is also very easily pleased.

Ganesha is just the opposite of his father. He must have laddoos to eat. He must wear a green cloth below the waist and a yellow cloth above. His clothes must match. Ever since Ganesha came here I have been afraid that he may make me discard the ragged loincloth I wear and change the way I dress. Even in my earlier life I never wore silk; I was a man who wore khadi. The second fabric I used to wear was tussar from Nath Nagar, because it is hand-woven. The poor weavers earn some money if we buy their hand-woven textiles. I bought bundles and bundles of hand-woven tussar worth hundreds of thousands of rupees, dyed it geru and sent it to Australia. I had thousands of disciples and I used to give them hand-made geru dhotis so that the money could reach the poor people who weave the cloth. I used to wear khadi for the same purpose, in order to help the poor.

How was it possible for the image of Ganesha to drink milk?

Nothing is impossible in this world. Why talk about the image of Ganesha drinking milk? What about the miracles that occur everyday in your own life? How did you survive and grow in your mother's womb for nine long months? What was the source of your sustenance there? Today you are a fully grown adult. Look at the human brain; it is nothing short of a miracle. This very brain has produced the computer and the aeroplane. It has brought about all civilization and culture, all the technology in the world of today. Life itself is a big miracle.

To my mind, life itself is the biggest miracle, and the second miracle is the law of nature. The stars and planets, sun and moon rise at a given time without fail. All these heavenly bodies maintain their respective rhythms and cycles so perfectly that there is no deviation, even for a moment. So one miracle is life itself and another is the law of nature, the precise order of the universe. Are these two not real miracles? But nobody cares about these miracles and nobody bothers to ask questions about them. If you look around for miracles, there is no dearth of them. There is a flower here which changes its colour three times during the day. There are miracles and miracles. There is one more stunning miracle, the miracle of rebirth.

Birthday of Bhole

Tomorrow we celebrate the birthday of a special devotee, Bhole, and everyone is invited. He was born on 20th December in Dhanu Rashi, so he is very emotional and sensitive. He was born under a lucky star. The Ready-Made Store was started in his name and it is a store that never empties. Although it serves thousands and thousands of people throughout the year, yet everyday it fills up again. Bhole's godfather is a Muslim. His shop had stopped doing business, but after he started supplying food to Bhole, he became a moneyed man. His eldest son could start a tea shop. His second son got a rickshaw. His wife calls Bhole her good fortune, her lucky star. She comes to have his darshan but Bhole gives darshan to nobody.

How are japa and kirtan related?

When you repeat the name of God in your japa it becomes japa yoga. When the name of God is sung it becomes kirtan or samkirtan. The mahatmas have proclaimed samkirtan to be the simplest, easiest, cheapest, shortest and the best available means of establishing your connection, your relationship with God in the Kali yuga, which is the present age or era of tension, stress, conflict and strife. People choose particular days of the week, like Sunday, Monday, new moon

day, to sit together and do samkirtan in a group. Even at home, if all the family members are inclined, they can sit together and sing samkirtan for ten or fifteen minutes. A harmonium and tabla are not necessary for this. In kirtan the most commonly used instruments are kartal and manjira. Children also like kirtan so they can easily be included.

If you want to remove some undesirable culture from your midst, you must replace it without leaving any gap or vacuum. What have you given to your children? You have fed them with milk, Horlicks and Complian. You have given them everything except the essential ingredient, which you now feel is also missing from your own life, yet you hardly realize that you reap what you sow. When you are planting babul, you can hardly expect mangoes. If you plant roses you will get roses, but if you plant thorny babul you will get nothing but that. It is impossible to get mangoes from a babul tree.

Now a new consciousness is emerging, not only in India, but also worldwide. It is catching up with all the religions and societies of the world. What is this rage? It is naam samkirtan, which is the highest form of bhakti. You must have heard this wise dictum:

*Harinaam, Harinaam, Harinaam kevalam
Kalau nastyeva nastyeva nastyeva gativanyatha.*

Here, the word *kalau* means ‘in Kali yuga’. The words *Hari naam*, meaning ‘God’s name’, are repeated three times to give them the required emphasis. There is no other alternative, no better means to reach God than singing His name. Dhyana, japa and pilgrimages can be done by only a few. Ethical values like satya, ahimsa, asteya and brahmacharya remain bookish codes of conduct. It is practically impossible for the majority of people to practise them. But there is a way out.

Now you can pick up samkirtan from here and continue it when you go home. If you cannot do it in your own home, you can join a group like the Munger Kirtan Mandali and do samkirtan with them weekly. Just fix a holiday when the

children can also participate. Children pick up samkirtan very quickly. They are very pliable. This is the best period to mould them. My time is over. My booking and reservation for the other world is already done. I am all set, ready to leave. I am only waiting for the train to arrive.

How can we be citizens of the culture of tomorrow?

If you really want to be the citizens of tomorrow, then you must purge your home of three things: 'hotel, bottle, total'. Do not take it amiss. I do not mean to infringe upon your private life, although it is the privilege of a sannyasin to take stock of your family life and, if necessary, to correct it. You should get rid of the vicious trio: hotel, bottle and total. Only then will your children be beautiful, healthy and happy. They will be obedient and serve you affectionately, so you will not need an old age home for succour.

Otherwise you had better be prepared for the predicament of an old age home. The way you are bringing up your children, the way you are neglecting their basic needs for good samskaras, forebodes that the time is drawing near when your children will tell you to live on your own and to look after yourselves. This is bound to happen here as it has already happened in most of the world. Only one quarter of the world has been spared and this problem is beginning to show its head even in India. Therefore, you should administer a dose of naam samkirtan to your younger generation, your society and your people. Now we will do naam samkirtan.

Distribution of prasad

Here is a copy of *Ramacharitamanas* for reciting and for pooja. Rama, Lakshman, Janaki is the best prasad. All other forms of prasad are perishable, but this prasad is imperishable. At the time of death your money will be locked in a bank, your car will remain in the garage. Your wife will see you to the door of the house, but she will go no further than that with you. Your relatives will accompany you to the cremation ground. Your own body will go with you to

the funeral pyre, but no further than that. However, this prasad will accompany you even after death and that is why I have given it to you. I give prasad in the form of wealth and resources because money is also necessary. Without money you cannot subsist, but at the same time, common sense, positive thoughts, intelligence, virtue and devotion are equally important. Food cooked without salt has no taste, just like sweets without sugar. Similarly, life without devotion is worthless because it has no meaning.

Satsang 22

December 20, 1996

Today even students of yoga have to sit for exams. If you want to promote yoga or any other system, you will have to adapt it to suit the needs of society. Yoga is an ancient science that has been tried and tested down through the ages, but how will it be taught today? A form of yoga that can be examined will slowly find its way into the curricula of different educational institutions and universities. You have to adapt to the changing times. Although yoga has maintained itself for centuries without exams, now it will have to take a new form to suit present day needs.

Guru Nanak

Now I would like to introduce the Sardarji. When I used to visit the Arab countries, I often stayed in the gurudwaras. Will you tell us about Guru Nanak?

Sardarji: Guru Nanak is a guru and since he is a guru he is the all pervading reality. Guru is not merely confined to a body. Guru is not merely confined to space and time. He looks as if he is in a body; it looks as though the light is there, but it is everywhere. The sun is shining there, but it is everywhere. Likewise, guru might be in Nanak's body, which was born in Punjab, but his body is everywhere. He is also in you, so the first point is that guru is all pervasive.

The second point is that his teachings are very simple. He reminds you that you are not just a physical, human being. You are not just the mental being, who is born and dies, who is sorry or angry, who is a sinner or a virtuous man. You are He. Christ said the same thing to his followers, "My Father and I are one." So every human being, every being that exists, everything that is in you, is potentially divine. Everyone is potentially divine. The third point is that, if you love all, then you love God. So, the sutra follows, 'Love is God'.

Guru Nanak's teachings can be summarized in two words: service and remembrance. You do service of God, but God does not need anything from you because He has already given you everything. He is *daata*, *daani* and *malik*, the giver and the owner. What can you give God? These are his people all around you, millions and millions of people. So, you should serve them because they are potentially divine. Everyone and everything is potentially divine. God is in all.

When Guru Nanak says that you should serve God, it means that you should serve Him in any form where it is required. The God in a temple, church, gurudwara or mosque doesn't need your service because He is the *daata*, the giver. He is rich; he has everything. The whole world is his kingdom, so what can you give Him? But there are some people who are in need and by serving them you can find God. That is one teaching of Guru Nanak.

The second teaching is remembrance of God's name. What name does God have? Today we know Him as Vahe Guru, Rama, Krishna, Christ. Maybe after a while another name will be added. There was a time when nobody knew Allah, Christ, Mary or Rama. In another fifty years another name may be added. Before Buddha, Mahavir or Mohammed were born, nobody knew God by those names.

Actually, God has no name but we are all poor, weak people and we need some help, just like a child needs a mother. So the Name comes to you as a mother and that name has to be repeated. Remember God and repeat His

name with each ingoing and outgoing breath. Remember Him with every repetition of the name. Concentrate on the breath from the navel to trikuti, from trikuti to the navel, up and down. Then combine the name and it becomes a means of shabad. What is shabad? It is said in the Bible, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.” That is *shabad*, nada Brahman. It is the same with mantra; you say God’s name. When you repeat and remember God’s name, it becomes shabad and shabad becomes one with *surat*, awareness.

Sri Swamiji: I remember another bhajan by Kabir: *Chanda Suraj do bane masalchi surat suhagina nacha rahi, sata mahal men sarangi baja rahi*. The sun and moon are the two nadis, ida and pingala. *Suhagina nacha rahi* means ‘the married woman is dancing up and down’. She is called the married woman because she has a red vermilion mark at her eyebrow centre to distinguish her married status. The red vermilion mark represents ajna chakra. ‘The married woman is dancing up and down’ means that the shakti within sushumna is moving up and down between the eyebrow centre and the navel centre. To accompany her dance up and down, the music of the sarangi plays in the *sata mahal*, or seven-storied palace. Actually it is the seventh heaven.

Guru Nanak is the founder of the Sikh Panth. When Guru Nanak was a child he used to go to school. If he saw his classmates without proper clothes, he would give them his own clothes to wear. If he learned that a boy had no blanket, he would take some warm things from his home, without his father’s knowledge, and give them to that boy. This means he had great kindness, compassion, affection and love for his fellow beings.

Guru Nanak had a son called Srichandra Maharaj, who was a spiritually illumined boy and a vairagi from birth, like Sukhdev. He had so much dispassion that he felt no attraction for worldly life. Ultimately his disciples formed a sect, which is known as the Udasin sampradaya. In Vedic religion there are three important monastic traditions: sannyasi, vairagi and udasi. Just as I belong to the sannyasi

tradition, there are many people who belong to the vairagi tradition of Ayodhya and Mathura. Then there is the udasi tradition of Amarkantak, founded by Kalyan Muni. A Kalyan ashram still exists there, even today.

Guru Nanak was always travelling all over India and sometimes in the Middle East, sometimes in China or Japan. He went to Mecca as well. His teaching was that there is no place God is not. God is in the east, west, north and south. He is above and below. He is omnipresent. When people die, whether they are Christian, Muslim, Hindu, theist or atheist, all go to the same place. There is no separate heaven for Christians, Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs.

Swami Niranjan: Now I would like to introduce the honourable guests from New Delhi's respected Shishganj and Banglaseshab gurudwaras, who will present the shabad. The leader is Professor Baldev Singh, who was previously in the Golden Temple at Amritsar and is now principal of the Music College. He is accompanied by his brothers, Harpal and Birendra Singh. We are thankful to them for singing the shabad kirtan and leading us on the path of spirituality with their devotional music.

The first shabad kirtan started with the words, *Bolo Bhaiya Rama Nama Patitapavana*. The meaning is, "Those devotees are lucky in whose house is the treasure of the Lord's name. They are considered saints in whose house is the treasure of the Lord's name. These saints are beyond birth and death. They come to help others, to offer their lives in the service of others and to take everyone on the path of bhakti towards God. The kingdom of saints is truth and they are the emperors of their kingdom. They are coloured in the colours of God. Let me have darshan of your devotees all the time is the prayer of Baba Nanak."

The next kirtan is, *Re mana Ram se tu kar preet*. It means, "O mind, love Rama, listen to the glories of Govinda with your ears and sing their names with your tongue. By remaining in the company of sadhus and remembering the name of the Lord, even the greatest sinners are purified. O

friend, time in the form of a snake is over your head. You are going to be subject to time today or tomorrow. My guru, Baba Nanak says, ‘O my friend, remember this and sing the glories of Rama because time is passing away.’”

* * *

Sri Sant Dhanvant Singh travels continuously inside and outside India. His main institute is Vishvalohani Samstha, which gives refuge to widows and old people and runs schools for orphaned children. As his accompanist we have Baba Harsingh who has dedicated his whole life to *karseva*, or service without remuneration. During his life of service, he has inspired people to build two hundred and fifty gurudwaras in different states of India and is constructing another hundred and fifty.

The theme of the message given by Sant Dhanvantji was very simple. The question is: How to love God? It is easy to love something that is perceived, that is palpable, but how to love something which is not seen or palpable? Of course, this experience of divinity can only happen in a human being because humans have certain faculties, such as a mind and a brain, which allow them to experience the subtle nature or aspect of divinity. The human body is a medium through which one can experience and attain God.

God, or Rama, is the father, the creator of this entire seen and unseen, visible and invisible cosmos. Rama is also the son of Dasharatha. Rama is also all pervading and exists inside everyone. In order to recognize divinity, the godly nature, one must hear and sing the names of God. Then that remembrance will generate love in your heart and you will be free from all worldly demands.

Now we have with us Bhai Harcharan Singh, a *hazuri raagi*, who offers prayers to the Master. He is accompanied by Bhai Surendra Singh and Bhai Sukhwant Singh. The first shabad kirtan they will present begins, *Rama japo ji saise*. It means, “O individual soul, repeat the name of Rama with faith and conviction, without doubt or fear, just as it was

repeated by such devotees as Dhruva and Prahlad. O Rama, with faith in you, I have taken my whole self and all my companions into the ship which is your name. Whenever Rama accepts this being then that Rama will make him obey his commands, and the entire being along with all the companions of that being will cross the ocean. I have faith that wherever I get the grace and blessings of Guru Maharaj, then definitely the coming and going will stop forever and ever. Kabir says, ‘Remember and sing the glories of Rama, knowing him to be definitely the One in this world and beyond.’”

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The next shabad starts, *Rama Rama Bola Rama Rama*. It means, “The mouth becomes purified by repeating the name of the Lord. Death does not touch the person who is always engaged in the worship of the Lord, with whose spirit the individual soul attains everything. O brother, that is the holy name of Rama. Say the name Rama and remove all the mental distractions and passions, renounce them. The Lord has supported the earth and the sky. The light of God is pervading each and every atom.

By repeating the Lord’s name, the greatest sinner is purified. The repetition of name is the highest dharma. The highest karma is action done in His name. Even gods and holy people aspire to that. Therefore, O brother, you also serve the devotees and saints. The treasure of the Lord’s name is what we have received from God. One cannot describe the dimension of that treasure. The servant Nanak says, ‘O brother, you also meditate only on Hari and only on Hari, Hari, the Lord.’”

* * *

The following shabad is, *Kanthe mala jihva Rama*. The meaning is beautiful. Sage Narada and Saraswati both sit near Lord Krishna and fan him. Lakshmi, Rukhmini and

Satyabhama also sit beside him. Sri Krishna wears the *vaijayanti mala*, undecaying garland, which is always green and colourful, around his neck while his tongue continuously repeats the name of Rama. Kabir says, “Thousands of times I take the name of Lord Krishna and bow down to him. I sing the name and glories of Rama and I tell everyone, be they Hindu or Muslim, to also sing the glories of Rama, because Lord Krishna himself continuously does so.”

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Sri Swamiji: All this is part and parcel of my sadhana. Just as you do your sadhana in solitude, in the form of japa, pooja, meditation, kirtan and swadhyaya, for me this festival is a form of sadhana. For eleven months of the year I do my sadhana in isolation, but I allot one month for satsang with people and come out of isolation to continue my sadhana amidst all of you. It is a fact that if you want to establish a relationship with God, then satsang is a must. Unless and until you have satsang, clarity regarding God eludes you.

Without satsang there is no sense of discrimination and without the grace of God there is no ease in sadhana. It is by the grace of God that this satsang has come my way and through me it has come your way. The biggest benefit of this comes to me. The program today, which lasted over four hours, was nothing but the chanting of Ram naam. Throughout the last four hours we have been listening only to the name of Rama. We have been listening to stories and discussions about him, but mainly to his name. When we hear and speak about Lord Rama it becomes satsang. When we sing the name of Rama it becomes samkirtan. When you hear about him and chant his name, you have both satsang and sadhana.

Ram naam – super cleanser

All the mahatmas say that when you chant the name of Rama, your heart and inner mind becomes cleansed of all impurities. The name of Rama is a detergent, which washes

away all the dross from your mind. It is a fact that all who live in the world are stained by maya and worldly life. The wise man who enters a chamber full of soot does not expect to come out immaculate. You have to live in the world. There is no choice, because you know the dire consequences when you do not obey your inner compulsion.

While leading a material life, try putting the horse in front of the cart and it will run very well. Life runs smoothly when the mind is fixed on the Lord's name, like the fixation you have for your offspring, sickness, stomach ache, headache or injury. Just as that fixation becomes the focus of your attention and nothing else interests you, similarly, the name of God should become an obsession with you. Generally your total mind remains in the grip of worldly experience. However, when your mind is gripped by the Lord, your whole life is transformed, not only the external life, but the inner life as well. There is an external life of behaviour, action and reaction, and an internal life of thought, feeling, vibration and experience.

The name is not just a simple thing. The important things in life are small, minute, infinitesimal. An atom bomb is molecular, very small in size, but it can destroy the whole world. The Lord's name is called atma bomb. It can destroy the *asuri sampada*, the unholy powers within you. It can eliminate all the maya, impurity, baseness, dross, fear and frustration that is defiling you from within. All saints and great souls have said this from time immemorial. Those who understood it found salvation and freedom. Those who listened to this teaching and followed it found happiness and bliss. Those who ignored and disregarded it were drowned in the sea of material life.

What is the importance of sacrifice in the life of a spiritual aspirant?

An aspirant will have to make sacrifices if he wants to devote himself to spiritual life. He will have to sacrifice some of his goats, lambs and other animals. In spiritual life it is the animal qualities, the animal nature, which must be sacrificed.

There are many animals in you: greed, anger and jealousy are some. So, if you want to lead a spiritual life, you have to offer these qualities as sacrifice. This means you have to kill, eradicate, reject and renounce them so they are no longer in you. That is the whole purpose of sacrifice.

Many people sacrifice goats, pigeons, buffaloes and lambs, but that sacrifice does not help them in spiritual life. In the Jewish, Muslim and Hindu traditions, sacrifices are performed on certain days. The Jews observe Passover and the Muslims Bakri Kurban, which include certain sacrificial rites. Here they offer sacrifice during Kali pooja. However, such animal sacrifices do not help in spiritual life. If you believe in sacrifice, you are free to cut the goat. However, if you think that such sacrifice will help you progress in spiritual life, develop knowledge, attain peace, light, liberation or awaken your kundalini, this is far from the truth. However, if you wish to offer animal sacrifice for some other purpose, that is up to you.

The sacrifice in spiritual life is that animal which is part and parcel of your own personality. Without sacrificing, eradicating, destroying and renouncing that animal nature, it will not be possible to express your spirituality. If you don't clean your mirror, you won't see your face at all. If you want to see the reflection of your face, the mirror needs to be cleaned. Until and unless you sacrifice the animal within you, the purpose of spiritual life will not be served. So, the animal part of your personality has to be sacrificed in order to strengthen your spiritual life and make it successful and effective.

The animal lurks within you and me. The animal tendency and nature of man is not a human characteristic, but it definitely remains within us as a legacy of our previous births in animal forms. Whatever we have been in a past birth: dog, donkey or horse, the characteristic of that animal nature persists even in this human life. Many people have an animal nature in a human body, but that is not at all a human characteristic. The soul has passed through innumerable lower births before transmigrating into a

human body. So, it still carries vestiges of samskaras from the instinctive lives it has led before.

When a young bride goes to her husband's house after marriage, she still carries her own personality traits with her. When you go abroad in search of a job, you still take your Indian personality with you. That is called migration of personality. Thus, after passing through many lifetimes as different forms and species, man attains human birth, bringing with him the vestiges, imprints and samskaras of those past lives in succession. Those vestiges are animal samskaras. The shastras say that these animal samskaras become impediments on the spiritual path.

Although you practise meditation, devotion, sing bhajans and so on, desires still arise. Whatever little peace and quiet you have achieved goes to pieces at that time because the mind becomes agitated once again. That is why it is necessary to offer the instinctive nature as sacrifice. There are Muslims, Jews and Hindus who still sacrifice a lamb or goat. Thousands of animals are sacrificed in India, yet there is no spiritual gain from such sacrifice.

In spiritual life sacrifice is not performed in that way and nowhere is it mentioned in any of the shastras or holy books. Sometimes people make offerings with a motive, such as a desire for progeny. When a child is born, a goat, hen, pigeon or any other animal is sacrificed. However, this kind of sacrifice is not a spiritual practice and will not lead to spiritual progress or exhaust the accumulated samskaras of numerous births. Spiritual sacrifice means renouncing and rejecting the animal propensities within your nature. You will have to give up all those traits in your personality which are not human in order to lead a spiritual life.

Satsang 23

December 21, 1996

Yesterday and today *Lalita Sahasra Naam*, the thousand names of the Goddess Lalita, was chanted here. The thousand names are chanted as salutations to the Goddess. Worship of the Goddess is part of Tantra shastra. This tradition comprises a diversity of methods that lead one towards God, including Devi worship and yantras of tremendous potency, such as Sri Yantra. When this Akhara was being built, we had Sri Yantra placed in its foundations at nine locations. These yantras were made from a combination of metals, including silver and gold. In the sadhana shastras, Sri Yantra is considered to be very significant and it is highly glorified.

The Goddess or Devi has hundreds of names and forms. She is known as Sundari, Ambika, Anandi and so on. She is an auspicious power, destroyer of evil, remover of obstacles, fulfiller of wishes and desires. She also lies dormant at mooladhara chakra in the form of kundalini shakti. From that point she ascends through all the other chakras: swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna, and reaches sahasrara. Some of the mantras in *Lalita Sahasra Naam* describe this process and also refer to the explosion of the *granthis*, or psychic knots, in sushumna passage. That shakti, which is universal, exists as energy or

power. She does not have her own fixed, visible form. She is manifest in a myriad of forms and vibrations as well as in the formless state. Whatever can be seen in this world: trees, animals, human beings, beasts, birds, earth, soil, stones, rocks, gold, silver, water, air, sun, moon, stars, all these are the manifest forms of shakti. We are all the manifest forms of our Supreme Mother, just as we are the manifest forms of our biological mother.

That same shakti is also represented in different cultures and traditions. In the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs, she is Astuti Bhavani. During my trips to Japan I saw many ancient temples which showed Vedic and Buddhist influence. In these temples there were a number of images of Devi in different forms. Such temples are still found in traditional Japanese towns and villages.

Concept of dualism

This concept of Devi or Goddess is part of a universal principle, known as Shiva and Shakti, Purusha and Prakriti, yin and yang, ida and pingala, consciousness and energy. Just as electrical wiring must have two poles, positive and negative, in the human body there are also two channels of energy, ida and pingala, and two corresponding nervous systems, sympathetic and parasympathetic. The substance you call mind can also be divided into two parts: one is time and the other is space. You will find this duality everywhere; even in bhakti you have Bhagavan and bhakta, God and devotee. They are complementary to each other; they exist and relate mutually.

In the Shaiva sect this duality is known as Parvati and Parameshwara. In a wedding celebration the bride sits on the left side of the groom. The left side belongs to the female partner, the right side to the male partner. The left side belongs to Parvati, the right side to Shankara. The left side is ida, the right side is pingala, the left side is sympathetic, the right is parasympathetic. The left is minus, the right is plus, the left is space, the right is time. This is the concept of duality that was propounded by the rishis

and munis. However, it became difficult for lay people to understand, so they used different symbols, deities and myths to explain it.

First they explained theoretically what ida and pingala, time and space, matter and energy are, but ultimately you have to experience this theory within yourself. You have to try a practical experiment for yourself. There are many methods for trying this experiment and many ways of understanding and realizing it within. In the same way, there are many routes by which you can travel to Deoghar: from Calcutta, Delhi, Madras, Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. People come by their respective routes which differ one from another. The route from Benares will not be the same as from Gwalior, Jhansi, Calcutta or Tata Nagar. The route depends upon the starting point, although the destination of Deoghar is common to all.

It is wrong to assert that there is only one way for everybody. We are all standing at different positions in this world created by God. We have different characters and come from different levels, grades and classes. Some are standing at Rampur, others at Benares, Tata Nagar, Kanpur and Allahabad, so all will have to catch different trains to reach Deoghar. Therefore, there are as many paths as there are persons. All these paths and routes are termed as sadhana. There are many different paths of sadhana to suit the needs of each individual.

Glory of sankirtan

The simplest, easiest and surest sadhana, involving the least risk and expense, is the path of sankirtan. It is the easiest and yet the hardest to obtain because it is always out of stock. It is manufactured in India, yet never available in ample quantity because it is being exported to America, Europe and other overseas countries. This is the path of sankirtan. I am not talking about bhakti because this is such a profound subject that it cannot be explained in a few words. Bhakti, like the terms technology or medical science, is very difficult to define with a synonym. Bhakti bhava is a

vast, deep subject that comprises a number of aspects. So, at the moment I am talking about samkirtan.

Kirtan means chanting the name of God. The name can be selected from a number of names by which God is called. It can be Allah, Rama, Govinda or Guru. Whatever name you choose, go on singing it. Start slowly and go on building up the crescendo. As the rhythm increases you become more and more immersed. In the beginning the mind stays outside, but slowly it starts going within. You can sit for kirtan with your family at home. There is no need to make any special arrangements or to have a harmonium or dholak. If you have a manjira, that is good.

If you start kirtan in your own home, the most enthusiastic members will be the children. They will forget the TV and video. Children enjoy kirtan so much that they forget about everything else. Old people do not enjoy kirtan the way children do because they have already formed the bad habit of 'hotel, bottle, total'. Adults are already contaminated, but children are still fresh and pure. Their minds are clean slates, not yet conditioned by maya. In our case, however, the mind is completely brainwashed by maya.

Samkirtan is the greatest sadhana of India. Nowhere else in the world is it practised, East or West. This tradition is not found anywhere in Russia, Rumania, Czech Republic, Slovakia or Bulgaria. *Samkirtan*, *Hari bhajanam*, singing the Lord's name, is a discovery of Indian people. Our rishis and munis have discovered this unique path. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu told people to sing Hare Rama Hare Krishna, as the Lord's name alone can redeem the people of Kali yuga, the present age. There is no other path, panacea or way out in the present era.

Let us start with the family in which there are at least four persons. You can choose any convenient time to sit together with the family members, either before meals or before sleeping, and sing the name of God for at least ten or fifteen minutes. You should also take your children to kirtan sessions. Kirtans are held in many places. Small groups of sadhus sit together and sing kirtan. You can go

to a gurudwara for kirtan. Take at least one day off in a week, be it Monday or Sunday. All days are auspicious for remembering God; there is no special day reserved for God's service.

Whenever a kirtan is happening and you get wind of it, go and join in. Today the tape recorder is also available. Go and tape the kirtan on the spot, bring it home and play it to the children and other family members. You can sing kirtan anywhere, at home, in a social gathering or at any auspicious get together. This is a very good way to inculcate good habits in children. You should start slowly by devoting ten to fifteen minutes daily to kirtan. This new routine will help to make kirtan your second nature.

In Kali yuga you are free to do all types of sadhana. The saints, sages and mahatmas have told us there are hundreds of paths of sadhana. Lord Krishna mentions eighteen types of yoga in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The *Yoga Vashishtha* gives yet one more, jnana yoga. The *Ramacharitamanas* gives bhakti yoga. The *Guru Granth Sahib* teaches Guru Vani yoga. The Vedas and Puranas offer their own paths. Ultimately, however, the goal is one and the same.

Purification through name

All traditions have emphasized that by taking the Lord's name, man's mouth becomes purified. When you abuse someone at home or in the neighbourhood, people say, "Why are you polluting your tongue?" Thus it is said that if you abuse someone, your tongue sins, and by chanting the name of Rama it is cleansed and purified. By hearing the name of the Lord the ears also become purified. When you heard the chanting of *Lalita Sahasra Naam*, it felt good. Just as gossip and abuse contaminates the ears, listening to the name cleanses them.

We are also influenced by atmospheric vibrations. Three days ago Purushottam Jalota visited here. We have known each other for thirty or forty years. He has had bypass surgery. Our relationship is internal, not external. His operation was successful and he fulfilled his promise by

coming here to sing. Those who attended his program must have felt that it was not Purushottam Jalota alone who sang, but even the trees, electricity poles, microphone and wires, the whole atmosphere was singing with joy.

The whole atmosphere was ringing with the joy of music. When a person steeped in faith and devotion to God sings and reaches the intensity of complete self-oblivion, then even Prakriti, the entire, visible creation, sings with him. If that is so, won't your house be purified? If your wife is in the family way, even her unborn child will sing from the womb, when exposed to devotional music of this rare depth. The vibration of God's name influences all the gross and subtle aspects of creation.

Fulfilment of guru's words

Swami Sivananda was born in Pattamalai, a small place in the district of Thiruvannamalai in South India. He was educated in Madras and went to Malaysia after completing his medical course. Even today there is a place in Singapore called James Park, where a small settlement called Joharvahai still exists. It had a hospital for plantation people where Swami Sivananda was a doctor. While serving there, he was deeply moved by the plight of suffering humanity. There was acute poverty in those days. The condition of the poor and downtrodden was appalling. As labour was very cheap, the British used to get a lot of work done by these sick people at low cost. This is going to happen again, as manpower is very short and costly in the West.

After serving in Malaysia for a number of years, Swami Sivananda renounced his medical practice, returned to India and took sannyasa. He lived in Rishikesh at Swargashram, on the bank of the Ganga opposite to where he established the Divine Life Society, and did sadhana there. I first met him in 1943. Now he is no more, but there is a big ashram in his name. Swami Chidananda runs that ashram and he is greatly revered as the chief disciple of Swami Sivananda.

Swami Sivananda's life was an example of compassion, charity and generosity. He used to say to me, "Look, you

have come here to live, but this ashram will prove too small for you. You won't be able to develop here. Therefore, take yoga and spread it throughout the world so that it becomes a universal science, acknowledged and accepted by all." At that time I told him frankly that I had no knowledge of yoga, as it had never been my subject. I had studied Adwaita Vedanta, but I started to study yoga so that I would be able to reply to any questions which people might ask.

I had never done asanas myself, but I had seen my guru doing them in the ashram and thought he was doing some kind of acrobatics. I used to read only Sanskrit texts on Adwaita Vedanta, the Upanishads and commentaries of Shankara and Ramanuja. I was a man of intellect and reason. When I told my guru that I knew no yoga, he replied that I would pick it up, and so it happened. I learned yoga very fast and carried his teachings far and wide, across the continents.

While travelling all over the world, I realized how difficult it was to enter into competition with God-men. There were too many mahatmas, too many teachers, teaching many types of spirituality. The main problem was that the people who invited me never paid my return fare. I had to buy the ticket out of my own pocket. Once I went to Jabalpur and the organizers asked me by which class I would prefer to return, first or ordinary. I told them I would take whatever they gave me. They said that it was up to me, so I opted for first class, only to discover subsequently that I was to pay for it myself.

Once I went to Raigarh at the invitation of a particular gentleman and found no one to meet me when I got off at the station. I spent some time looking for him in vain. By then I had become very hungry and felt a headache coming on. So I asked for food, but the people would not give me any, saying how could a young man like me expect free food without working for it. In those days, being young, I used to get terribly hungry and it would cause a headache. Now I do not get headaches and can easily go without food. That day I walked for a few miles and found a monastery by the side of

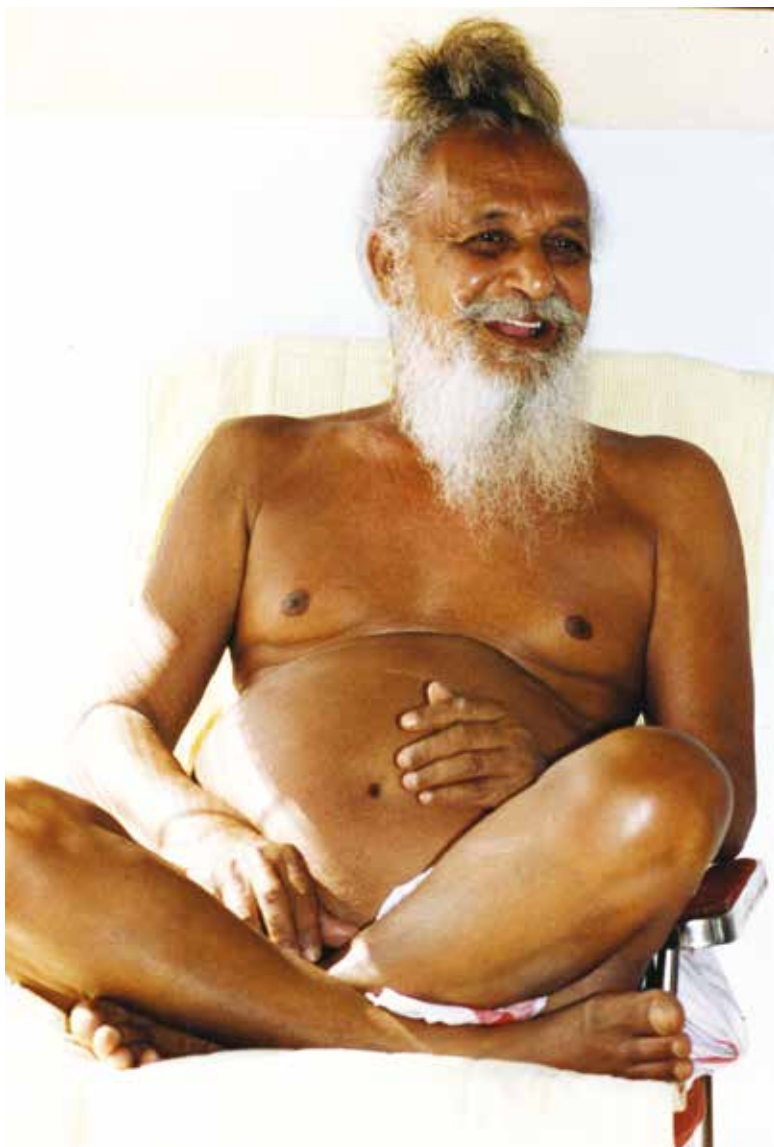
the road where a Belgian priest was living. He welcomed me and offered coffee and biscuits which relieved my headache. He also gave me a cigar to smoke.

I had such trying experiences that I finally succumbed to them and accepted defeat. Then I went to Trayambakeshwar, my ishta devata, near Nasik. I prayed to Him, "Lord, please give my car a little push from behind. I cannot get it running by myself. Once you get it moving, I will run it on my own." But the question remained: What could I give to God in return? So I promised that, after reaching my destination, I would leave that car and repay Him. "Lord," I prayed, "if you will just push my work now, I will instantly leave it all after completion! I shall renounce all my achievements then and there and move away."

From 1964, I worked with the thrust of a bulldozer. I travelled all over the world, to Europe, Australia, North and South America. Wherever I went people used to shave their heads and become sannnyasins. I taught them bhajans and kirtans. Later I lectured at hospitals and universities, and generous donations were given in return. My talks were always well received and I had to book engagements one year in advance. I used to travel without red tape and formalities. I enjoyed immunity from customs and immigration checks. Swami Satsangi used to look after all my tickets and travel arrangements.

In 1963, I asked the Lord to help me fulfil my mission for twenty years, and in 1983 I gave it all up. I had only one goal in the beginning, which was to restore yoga to its original status and glory. This was my guru's order and through me this mission was fulfilled and yoga was universally accepted. If it is the wish of the guru, then his grace also comes down upon you. There is simply no scope for doubt in this regard.

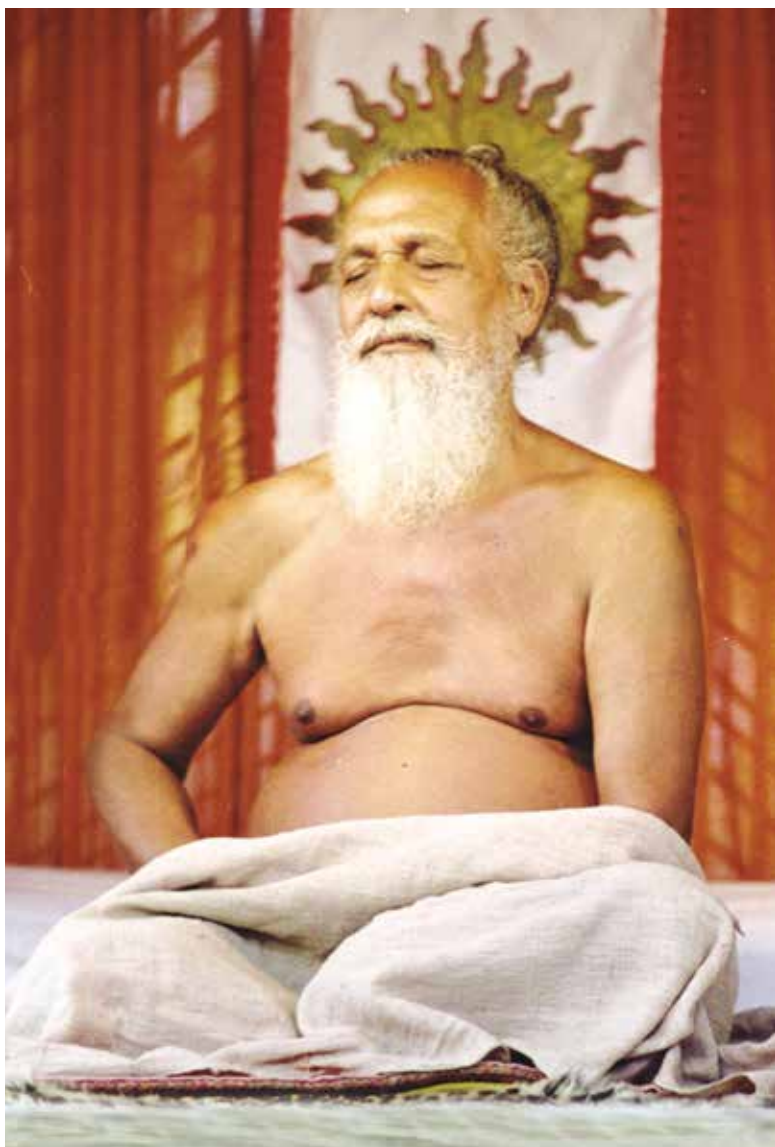
However, the relationship which I have with my guru is not the same as that which some people have with me. Often people just want to cling to me and move in the guru-disciple orbit, but I do not like that. I like open envelope relationships. My guru commanded me to establish yoga all



Sri Swamiji



Sri Rama



Sri Swamiji



Sri Rama and Sitaji united in wedlock

over the world, and it happened like that. The words of the guru fructify through the disciple if his heart and lifestyle are simple and innocent. The disciple should have a heart like a child.

Magic of Sita's wedding

We started this Aradhana on 26th November and soon after news reached us that a very powerful storm was moving rapidly towards us from Andhra Pradesh. This was not an ordinary storm, but one of the most devastating and fiercest cyclones of the century. Where we are situated in the north, even an ordinary storm uproots and fells trees to the ground. So what would happen if the cyclone reached us? It would have reduced all the arrangements to dust and Sri Rama's image would have had to be removed to a shelter. I know man has no control over such a fury of nature, but I thought of another plan.

The 15th December is Shukla Panchami of Marga Shirsha, the day when Sita's wedding took place. So I decided to celebrate Sita's wedding as a part of this Aradhana and at once the weather forecast began to improve. All the preparations for celebrating this auspicious occasion were immediately begun. The image of Sri Sita was brought from Jaipur; she and Sri Rama are both from Rajasthan. She was to arrive on the fifteenth, but I insisted that she be here on the twelfth itself. All the wedding finery, dowry and other arrangements connected with the wedding were organized. When the villagers heard about the wedding, they came here in their teeming multitudes. They just poured in and I wondered whether the place would collapse with the crowd.

The village women came and sang the local, customary wedding songs in which they abused and teased me in fun, as I belonged to the bridegroom's party. It is customary here to shower the groom's people with abuse. There was a lot of carousing that goes on with Indian wedding celebrations, but to me this event was not a joke. Rita Verma, a Member of Parliament, arrived just in time to take Sita to the wedding

pandal. So the storm diverted its route and Sita's wedding took place. Had it come, everything would have collapsed and it would have been Hari Om Tat Sat.

Any storm arising in the Bay of Bengal is destructive because it is so close to us, but this was a disastrous cyclone. I had to arrange Sita's wedding just to prevent it invading from the south and it worked. It did the trick and we were all spared the fury of Mother Nature. People thoroughly enjoyed the occasion and expressed their desire to repeat it next year as well. I told them the wedding would take place only if the people made ample provision for the dowry.

The word dowry comes from *dahej*, which originates from the Sanskrit word *adibhag*. In English it can be translated as female inheritance. It is the birthright of every girl. Whichever family the girl enters after getting married, she should not go empty-handed. When a boy visits his in-laws, he can go empty-handed, but a girl must take her wealth with her. She may take a television set, motorcar, scooter, cycle, ornaments, gold, silver, diamonds, pearls. She is equated with Lakshmi and should not enter her husband's house like a beggar. There are boys as well as girls born within the family, so the give and take of the dowry system is adjusted.

Swami Niranjan: Now Sri Baldev Singh, accompanied by Bhai Harpal Singh and Bhai Devendra Singh from Delhi will sing the shabad kirtan. The kirtan is *Bolo Raam nare nishkaam*. The meaning is, "The darkness of ignorance is removed by the words of my guru, with whose blessings I have seen that Rama who resides in every atom. Only that person who has thought about this and has spoken the name of Hari in his heart has seen the truth and the untruth in his own heart. O brother, repeat the name of Rama with the grace of guru. He is the auspicious one. With the grace of guru find the jewel of the Lord's name, by which the darkness of ignorance is removed and the light of wisdom dawns. There are many people bound in maya who cannot break the bondage, so they die in maya without removing

their delusion. Only when they meet the satguru, who breaks down their delusions, are they considered to be true human beings.”

* * *

The next bhajan begins, *Nahi chhodo Baba Rama Naam mero aur nahi kama*. Hiranyakashipu sent his son, Prahlad, to school and a number of small children also went with him. When the teacher began teaching, Prahlad protested, saying, “Why are you teaching me all these worldly things? Just write the name Gopala on the slate of my heart. I cannot leave Rama Naam. I am not interested in any knowledge other than bhakti and the name of the Lord.”

The teacher reported the matter to Hiranyakashipu. Hiranyakashipu called Prahlad and reprimanded him, saying, “Prahlad, give up the chanting of Rama’s name and listen to me instead. I shall liberate you immediately.” Prahlad replied, “Why are you harassing me again and again when I have told you that I will never give up the name of Rama, who has created land, water and mountains, this whole world. If I give up the name of Rama, it would bring shame to my guru, Narada. You may drown me, burn me or kill me by any other means, but I will never give up Rama Naam.”

Hiranyakashipu flew into a rage. Drawing his sword, he charged at Prahlad, challenging his faith thus, “Let me see who will protect you now!” At that moment Narasimha, a monstrous creature, half man/half lion, came out of the pillar. He tore Hiranyakashipu to pieces and killed him instantly. That entity was God’s incarnation, who took this form for the sake of His devotee. Several times God has saved and uplifted devotees like Prahlad. Therefore, never give up the name of Rama. I have no other concern except the repetition of the Lord’s name.

* * *

The next kirtan starts with the words, *Kaha karun jaati kaha karun paati, Raama ke Naama japo din raati*. It means, “O brother, my mind is the measure and my tongue the scissors. With these tools I cut the noose of death. I have nothing to do with caste. I repeat the name of the Lord day and night. I colour the people’s clothes and I mend them when necessary, but I cannot live without the name of the Lord. I am devoted to my Lord. I sing the glories of the Lord twenty-four hours a day.”

* * *

The sum and substance of the last lecture by Sri Sant Dhanvant Singh was that a yogi is a person who is united with God. In Sri Guru Granth Sahib it has been said that a yogi is he who is united in Guru Vani, the message of the gurus. A ruler can be a yogi while ruling his country. Householders can be yogis while managing their households. Renunciates can become yogis even though they may renounce everything. People who practise austerities can also become yogis. It is not your actions, which decide whether you are a yogi or a bhogi, but your inner being, which is united in the eternal message of the gurus and the Lord.

Religion does not depend on the family in which you are born or the country where you take birth and die. Dharma is not religion, sect or sampradaya. Dharma is unity with God. You may belong to any cult, sect or religion, but that is like having clothes with nobody inside. The body inside is your effort to attain unity with God. The world recognizes dharma, not adharma. It is the saints who are always remembered and who become great, renowned and respected.

Greatness does not lie in how many cars you have, how many factories you run, or how many palatial homes you may possess. True greatness depends on what you have given to the world. Your greatness is your contribution to the world, and in order to contribute properly you must have

peace. However, you will have to douse the fire of desire, ill will, criticism and negativity in order to obtain peace. The message we receive from the life of Guru Nanak is that we should remove hypocrisy and become established in dharma.

O guru, how can the brightest of lights enter into my heart? When you keep the Lord inside, then you will always have the brightest of all lights. What is the highest worship? The highest worship is the Lord's name. What is the highest renunciation? Renouncing desire, anger and greed is the highest renunciation.

What is the highest search in life? Ask your guru to guide you in realizing the glories of the Lord. How can one be awake in wakefulness? The best way to remain awake is through singing the Lord's name. What is the highest desire one should have? To unite with the lotus feet of the guru is the highest desire, but only those who have an auspicious destiny can attain it. Baba Nanakji says that everything is highest and most auspicious for those who surrender at the feet of the Lord.

The next shabad kirtan is, *Teerath Prabhu kaa, Prabhu kee gaao meri rasanaa, Aneka baar kara bandan sankalpa*. It means, "O tongue, sing the glories of the Lord and worship the saints, for in them are placed the lotus feet of the Lord. Without remembrance of the Lord's name, all efforts are worthless and useless. They do not open the doors of wisdom. Only when God is compassionate towards you can you meditate on the Lord. Meritorious karmas do not purify this body, but wisdom can be obtained in the company of saints with pure thoughts. Desires are never fulfilled even by the enjoyment of the many colours of maya, but as soon as you take the Lord's name all pleasures are obtained. Guru Nanak Sahibji says, 'When the highest and purest, the Supreme Being becomes compassionate towards you, then all the bondage of Maya disappears.'"

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In this shabad kirtan, Kabir says, “O mind, remember Rama, otherwise in the end you will be sorry. O self, do not crave after wealth, because today or tomorrow you will be leaving all this behind. O mind, you are wasting your life in greed, and the elusive dance of maya has led you to forget yourself. Do not take pride in youth and wealth because at the time of death all this will be destroyed. O mind, when the god of death throws you on the ground and holds your hair, at that time you cannot do anything. So remember Rama now. If you do not sing the glories of God, if you are not compassionate, if you do not contribute towards the welfare of others, you will suffer at the time of death. O mind, when Dharmaraja asks you for the details of your karmas, what will you tell him? Bhakta Kabir says, ‘O holy ones, listen! You can cross this ocean of samsara if you remain in the company of sadhus and saints.’”

Satsang 24

December 22, 1996

If you read the Sanskrit texts on the science of beauty, you will indeed be surprised to find a detailed categorization of every feature of human anatomy, nose, eyebrows, eyes and so on. Not only are they categorized and classified, they are also given different names. For instance, the names given for the eyes are meenakshi, mayurakshi, mriganayani, kamalakshi and so on. Eyes have a variety of shapes. *Meenakshi* means fish-shaped eyes. *Mayurakshi* means eyes like those of a peacock. *Vishalakshi* means very large eyes such as Bengali women have. Some eyes are called *mriganayani*, like those of a deer. *Kamalakshi* means eyes like a lotus bud. Then there follows a description of the nose, lips, eyebrows, forehead, ears, chin, shoulders, bust, waistline and the three lines or folds visible on the abdomen.

The abdomen of Lord Rama is described as having three folds. His hands reached down to his knees and so he was called Ajanabahu. A description of Lord Rama's fingers is also found in the shastras. Sri Sita is not described in such detail, nor is Parvati, but Devi, Chandi and Mahishasuramardini, the Goddess Durga, are elaborately described. Poets and writers are touchy about describing the beauty of Sita and Parvati. Tulsidas is frank enough to confess that he cannot describe the beauty of Parvati, as it overwhelms

him. Being her son, he stops short, “How can I describe the beauty of my Mother?” His description of Sita is also cryptic. All he says is that she cannot be compared with Lakshmi, Parvati or Saraswati. So saying, he abstains from further description of Sita’s beauty.

In the shastras the descriptions of the goddesses are very beautiful. Kali and Saraswati are liberally described. Now, delving deep into such classical descriptions again and again, it has become my second nature to observe people’s features with a discerning eye and catch the resemblance between actual persons and the classical descriptions. The main texts which describe Devi are *Lalita Sahasra Naam*, *Tripura Stotra* and *Ananda Lahari*. These are all tantric texts. To chant and listen to them is a sadhana in itself. They are not just poems, but utterances of the rishis and munis when they were in sublime states of consciousness.

What are your views on the inheritance laws in India?

When the father dies, the bank balance should be nil. The need to make his own future will create more impetus and drive in the son. In this age, the son is waiting and hoping for money to come from his father after retirement. According to the Indian legal system the son has a right to receive the father’s wealth. There is no such law in the West, so children become capable and confident in their own abilities from an early age. They know that they have to fend for themselves and so they start earning from the age of fourteen. Only if the father makes a will in which the son is named as a recipient does the son inherit the property. In India there is a lack of dynamism, assertiveness, competitive spirit and capacity for struggle amongst youngsters, because of the parental security which they enjoy.

Could you tell us something about the Sikh tradition and the guru lineage?

Neither Guru Nanak nor Guru Govinda Singh nor any of the other gurus in between were Sikh. The last guru was not a Sikh. In fact, Guru Govinda Singh was a Bihari, not

a Punjabi; he was born in Patna Sahib. When his father was on the way to Assam with his army, his wife was also accompanying him. As they reached Patna she went into labour, so she had to remain there with the child. Guru Govinda Singh laid the foundation of the Khalsa sect. There was nothing called Sikhism before that, and no other guru followed after that.

Guru Govinda Singh stopped the lineage of the gurus. He said, “No more gurus.” He must have observed some covert problems, so he put an end to the guru tradition and proclaimed that thereafter the Guru Granth Sahib would be the only true guru. He installed Guru Granth Sahib and laid down the rule of worshipping only that holy book as guru. One who reads it is called a *granthi*, one who sings it is called a *raagi*, and one who serves it is called a *sevdar* and a *jathedar*. There is no disparity between the Vedic philosophy and teachings of Sikhism. There is nothing in Sikhism that is not found in the Vedic tradition.

What is the spiritual significance of the colour geru?

Throughout the world geru is known as the colour of sannyasins, just as green is associated with Muslims. Black and blue also have certain associations. White is associated with purity. Geru is considered to be the symbol of yoga or spirituality. Geru mud contains small amounts of radioactive energy, but only about as much as the waters of the Ganga, which are capable of killing small bacteria. For this reason geru is good for yoga, meditation, the mind and health.

Geru is not so much a symbol of sannyasa as of spirituality. Sannyasa is considered to be a sectarian order, but I managed to keep myself away from sects and religions. I kept myself clear of these labels and projected myself as a yoga teacher, yoga expert and yoga therapist, so I never had a problem. The Catholic Church used to invite me for programs and pay for my transportation as well. I used to visit them frequently.

I made the monks and nuns shave their heads and wear geru, and gave them new yogic names like Pragyatirtha,

Pragyamurti and so on. I brought it to their notice that Catholics nuns were also required to shave their heads, although nowadays they do not. Monks and nuns have become modern just as we have, by growing their hair. Nobody objected to my initiation of shaven heads, geru clothes and new names. Father Londoneo, the head of Jesuit priests in South America, used to follow me wherever I went in Colombia.

While asking the monks and nuns to wear geru clothes, I would point out to them that it was not for religious but for scientific reasons, as geru was associated with good health, restored vitamin D to the body, relieved itching and prevented harmful bacteria from entering the body, even while visiting filthy places. I explained it in this way because nowadays people understand only these aspects, not the esoteric ones.

What is the power of music and how can it be awakened?

I had a guru brother by the name of Swami Nadabrahmananda. He could sit down, close his mouth and nose and still play the tabla. If a coin was placed on top of his head, it would dance up and down to the rhythm. He died at the ripe old age of ninety. Lots of experiments were done on him in America. He came from Karnataka and could speak no other language other than Kannada, but somehow he landed in America. He had great musical powers and could change the condition of his limbs or even his heart by music. When I read about the experiments carried out on him, I realized the power of music to transform both body and mind. Music can even change the chemistry within the human body. It can bring about a change in the cholesterol level, the white or red blood cell count or even the plasma. All this was experimented on and proven.

Conversation with the deities

I will tell you what happened yesterday. When I left the program wearing my robe, the first thing Bhole did was to probe and check whether I had my loincloth on or not and

then he cheered, saying, “Hip hip hurray.” Then I went to Ganeshji, who said, “Look Satyananda, in name you are my guru brother, but your ways and my ways are very different. You wear a langoti and I am fond of decent clothes. You eat khichari and I like good food. You seem to be like my father.” Yes, I thought, Ganeshji is my guru brother for I am a disciple and devotee of Lord Shiva.

After that, I escaped from Sri Ganesha and went to Raghunath Kutir, only to face the fun poked at me by Sitaji. She is from Mithila, so she is good at making fun of people and laughing heartily at them. Lord Rama is too genteel and polite to laugh out loud; he just smiles shyly and sweetly. Then Lakshman said to me, “Oh, you are wearing two turbans today.” I replied, “Yes, one is from the people of Bombay and the other is from the Sardars.” Hanumanji told me that it was all right to wear the long robe, the *alfi*, just for a day or two, but I must never give up my loincloth. I promised to obey him. I am telling you everything that took place yesterday. I do not know what will happen today. This conversation took place yesterday when I went to the deities for the evening worship in the splendid attire given to me by the Sikhs.

Swami Niranjan: The words of the shabad kirtan begin with, *Acharya eka sunore Pandya, aba kichha kahaa na jai*. It means, “O Pandit, listen to this amazing news. Nothing can be said at this moment. It is this maya who has captivated all the three lokas, who has gods, gandharvas and human beings completely enamoured. From Lord Rama comes the sound *hrd*, by the grace of which we are led into samadhi. To attain that state we have taken this body with ten doors, governed by ida and pingala nadis, the left and right channels of energy, and transformed our hearts into a golden vessel of divine nectar. Into the golden vessel of our heart, the nectar of atmananda, called *nirmal*, that which is free from impurity, is trickling. Thus I have experienced the *atma rasa*, the best of all rasas through the ten doors of my body.

O yogi, a wonderful thing has happened. I have made my breath the glass from which to drink the wine of Nama Rasa. Tell me the name of just one yogi in all the three worlds, who has drunk the supreme Rasa of Nama and found satiation. Bhakta Kabir says, “The knowledge of the Purushottam Prabhu has dawned in my heart. I am absorbed in Name continuously and have forgotten the rest of the world. My mind is becoming immersed in the supreme intoxication of Rama Nam. O Pandit, do listen to this wonderful revelation of mine about which I can say nothing further.”

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The meaning of the second shabad is, “O brother, the person who controls the five fires, who meditates on the form of God which is Omkara, who is free from egoism, and whose mind is pure, performs the ultimate form of dance. O Lord, your devotee dances in the above manner and sings your glory. In the divine dance the instruments, mridanga and bells, are the anahad songs, which he plays and listens to. This form of devotee develops understanding and then makes other people happy through his conduct. First, he repeats the name of the Lord in his heart then he makes everyone hear the Lord’s name. This form of dancing devotee, who comes in contact with different beings, has the power to remove the sufferings of birth and death, even of hell. Nanak Sahib says that the person who listens and dances to the tune of the guru is the only one who remains awake in this Kali yuga.”

* * *

The third shabad kirtan has the following meaning: “O tongue, taste the sweetness of the Lord’s name! O tongue, sing the glories of Sri Rama! Forget all other tastes and just enjoy the taste of the Lord’s name, for that is always auspicious. O brother, remember the lotus feet of the Lord

in your heart and love only that One. Through keeping the company of saints become pure so that you do not have to come back again to this circle of birth and death. O Lord, You are the support of my soul. You are the Lord of all those who have nothing. Guru Nanak Sahib says, ‘Alas, I wish to repeat the name of Hari with every breath. O Lord, let me dote on You.’”

* * *

The words of the next shabad kirtan begin with, *Prabhu keejai kripanidhan, Ham Hari guna gayenge*. It means, “O Lord, give me your blessings so that I can sing. I am waiting for you to take me into your fold. I am an ignorant person, O Father. I know for sure that, despite all my mistakes, I am yours. O Master, whatever you give me yourself, only that I receive. I have no other shelter. O brother, those devotees who are beloved of Hari, to them only Hari is beloved. The light of the Lord fuses with the light of the devotee and in this way both become one. The Lord Himself is gracious to receive my love. The servant Nanak has taken the shelter of the Lord’s door. Now it is the duty of the Lord to save him.”

* * *

The next kirtan means, “Only You, only You, only You, only You. You are in the water, You are in the earth, You are in the rivers, You are in the oceans, You are in the trees, You are in the leaves, and You are in the heavens. We remember You and we glorify You. This entire world is Your creation. You are the One who lives in Mecca and You are Mecca. You are fearless, You are japa, You are austerity, You are direction, You are thought. Whatever is in the world is You and nothing but You.”

* * *

*Shiva Shankara Girija varadani
Shiva Hara Hara Hara bam bhola
Aaj chadhega bhanga ka gola
Aaj chadha hai bhanga ka gola
Shiva jata Ganga bilasat bhujaang
Bhrukuti Vishaal trinetra lal
Chadhe boodha beil marghata gail.*

Shiva Shankara is the granter of boons and
blessings,
Shiva Shankara is a simpleton.
Today there will be rising intoxication.
In his matted hair is Ganga,
Around his neck the serpent.
His brow is broad,
His three eyes are burning red.
He is riding the bull,
Going to the cremation ground.

Without intoxication there is no bliss, whether it is the intoxication of the stuff bought from a shop or the intoxication of devotion from within. In one song, Mira sings, *Peele Peele Hari Naam Ka Pyala*, which means drink the name of the Lord. *Pyala* refers to a glass of wine, whisky or liquor. It does not mean a cup of tea or coffee. It is a glass of wine because later she says, *Isko peekar or pilakar bana ja tu matawala* – drink this yourself, serve this drink to others and become intoxicated.

What does it mean? It means as you sing God's name, a point comes where your spirit rises high and you enter into a divine frenzy, a kind of euphoria. That blissful experience saves you from the extravagance of spending money on liquor and wine. If you have too much money, you should put it aside in an earthen piggy bank and when it is full send it to Rikhia. Beverages are for drinking, whether tea, coffee or milk. Bidis and cigarettes are for smoking. You indulge in them because there is no better alternative. But if the choice of samkirtan is available, you will be equally thrilled and intoxicated.

Once Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was walking past the river singing ‘Hari Hari Bol’ in boundless joy. He saw a washerman washing clothes. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu went up to him and told him to chant the Lord’s name with him. The washerman questioned, “How can I chant when I have to do the washing? Who will do my work?” But Chaitanya Mahaprabhu took away the clothes and infected the washerman with the chant of God’s name. The washerman forgot his argument and began to chant Hari’s name.

There are only three days left in which to conclude this festival. There has been such a downpour of devotional bliss that everybody is in high spirits. People rush here at seven-thirty in the morning, even if they are told to come at two in the afternoon. This is intoxication. In this blissful state man gives up all his vices. The influence of some intoxicants is such that even good people misbehave and make mistakes. Other intoxicants are such that even bad people become good under their spell.

Satsang 25

December 23, 1996

The balyogis of Munger will present the drama of *Bharat Milap*, which narrates a part of Lord Rama's life. The coronation of Rama has been announced and this scene depicts the celebration. The next scene shows King Dasharatha being forced to send his son Rama into exile. Dasharatha goes into a depression, the exile is announced and Rama leaves for the forest. He comes to the shores of the Ganga where the tribal chief welcomes him.

Rama wants to cross the Ganga by boat, but the boatman refuses, saying, "O Rama, I have heard that by your touch, a stone was turned into a human being. I am not going to take you across because my boat will become a human being and then how will I earn my livelihood?" So saying, he begs permission to wash the feet of Sri Rama and Sita, then takes them across the river. This is one of the most touching scenes in the *Ramacharitamanas*. Then Rama, Sita and Lakshman arrive at Chitrakoot, their first stop, where they stay for one and a half years.

Meanwhile, his younger brother Bharat, who is the son of the second queen, Kaikeyi, returns from his maternal uncle's place. It is announced that Bharat is to be crowned and that Rama has gone into exile. At this, Bharat gets terribly angry with his mother and decides that he will not accept the

throne. Instead he will go to Chitrakoot and bring his elder brother, Rama, back. So the younger brother, Bharat, goes to meet Rama in the forest along with the queen mothers, the royal retinue and the army.

Bharat arrives at Chitrakoot with the entire retinue and requests Rama to return to Ayodhya. Rama replies, “No, my father has asked me to go to the forest for fourteen years and I must fulfil his orders.” So, Rama gives his *kharau*, wooden sandals, to Bharat who returns without Rama to rule the kingdom as a trustee for fourteen years.

The last scene takes place at Nandigram. On returning from the forest, Bharat places the *kharau* on the throne of Ayodhya, but refuses to enter the city. He says, “If my brother is in exile, I will also remain in exile and live the same life of tapasya and brahmacharya.” So, we have Rama living the life of a forest dweller and Bharat living the life of a mendicant outside the capital in Nandigram. This is the most touching scene in the *Ramacharitamanas*. It is much more important than the killing of Ravana.

There are two important things in the *Ramayana*. One is *Bharat Milap*, when Rama and Bharat meet at Chitrakoot after Rama’s exile, and the other is *Rama Vivaha*, the wedding of Sita. Here we have celebrated both events, as both have been enacted here.

Swami Niranjan: Who does Sri Swamiji like most? The children of Munger, of course! Who are the guardians of yogic culture? Who else, but the children of Munger!

Sri Swamiji: Oh, it is all very good. I have no words to thank or commend you. Just see how beautifully these small children put on the show! Munger does have the spirit, that is certain. These children are members of the Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal of Munger, the children’s yoga fellowship, which has a large membership. It will be a good thing when they grow up. I don’t think we old people can manage any longer. Let the whole of India be under their charge. Let the responsibility rest on strong shoulders. They may make mistakes, but our mistakes are far worse.

Swami Niranjan: Today the classical dance of Kuchipudi is being presented by a dance group which has come from Gita Nritya Kala Mandir of Vijayanagram, Andhra Pradesh. The Kuchipudi dance was first documented historically in 1502, though it originated much earlier. Devout scholars, who gave performances while moving from place to place, used this dance form to give expression to social injustice. Kuchipudi dance has brought about a great revolution in the presentation of this ancient art. Considering this art as divine, many performing artists are doing loyal service to this dance form and it has achieved wide recognition in India as well as abroad.

Sri Swamiji: There is no difference between Ram Naam Aradhana and Shiva Aradhana, because wherever Rama is worshipped, Shiva is present, and wherever Shiva is worshipped, Rama is present. Shiva himself repeats the japa of Sri Rama. This celebration has a special and significant feature. The beginning, middle and end are characterized by dance recitals. Lord Shiva is called Nataraja and he loves dance. He may come and sit here amongst us because he himself has said that whenever Rama's name is chanted, he is always present there. He is also bound to attend Sri Rama's wedding. If there is no truth in it, I am not the liar. It will be the book that lies.

Thus, if we repeat his favourite program of dance three times each day, Shiva will be pleased with us, noticing that he, too, is being worshipped by us along with Lord Rama. Although an emperor, Lord Rama also lived like a sadhu for fourteen years. But he was from the Ikshvaku family, and in an emperor's court there are always dance and other cultural presentations. This dance form is very special because when the Ikshvaku family migrated south, dance went with them down south to Andhra Pradesh. History bears testimony to this great event and we find a glimpse of that glorious past in this dance form.

Satsang 26

December 24, 1996

Sivananda Math has sponsored higher education for many deserving girls, with board, lodging, tuition, transport, medical expenses – whatever a rich father would provide for his daughter. Things cannot be improved just by giving charity. A candidate must be deserving and keen. Education and an academic career should be the passion of one's life. A student should behave like a student. The life of a student is a life of sacrifice, like the life of a sannyasin. In olden times children were sent away to the gurukul for twelve years. When Lord Rama returned home from the gurukul, after twelve years his mother could not recognize him. He might have left home at the age of seven or eight and returned at the age of nineteen or twenty. As a result, his mother could not make out which one was Rama among the four princes. Parents who do not educate their children are their children's enemies, not their friends.

Marriage without harmony

It is wrong to consider household life to be the only end in life. Grihastha ashrama can be the goal only if all its proprieties and mandates are observed. The propriety in marriage is that the husband and wife live together in understanding. Understanding and compromise should

be a bilateral, not a unilateral process. If only one side compromises, the scale becomes unbalanced. But if the husband is like Lord Rama, then the girl can dedicate her whole life to him, body, mind and soul.

Without harmony and understanding between the partners, marriage cannot work. If there is no harmony in marriage, the household is a wilderness, not a home. When one wing of a bird is cut off, it cannot fly. A household is like a bird: both wings must be equally strong. With only one wing, a bird cannot take to the skies and the marriage fails. The household loses its peace and begets antisocial children and antisocial principles as a result. An unquiet, discordant marriage produces children who turn out to be schizophrenics, thieves, vagabonds, rascals and delinquents. Then society as a whole suffers; we all suffer because of such antisocial elements.

The husband doesn't realize that he is the cause of disharmony. He thinks he can take any liberty with his wife, that he is free to beat her, to drive her out of the house, even in the middle of the night. He thinks, "I can abuse her, I can drink as much as I like, I can live with another woman, and if my wife utters so much as one word of protest, I can knock her down and break her teeth." I have not only heard this, I have also seen it. We sannyasins are the CIDs of the families. We get the news from each and every household.

In such a situation when there is no balance, it is not right to say that the wife must stay with the husband. In a family, wife beating is like gangrene, and the diseased limb or organ needs to be amputated. If it is not cut off in time, the disease will spread throughout the body, the whole family, the whole generation and the next generation too.

Equal partnerships

In society, a man and a woman should share an equal partnership. Everybody makes mistakes. Neither a man nor a woman comes down from heaven. In every household there is bickering, differences of opinion, disappointments

and frustrations. A housewife should also understand that where there are two bangles, there are bound to be clashes. But cruelty is something entirely different. I am not saying that a woman should walk out on her husband at the slightest disagreement. Friction is a routine affair. Without clashes there would be no sweetness to life. If, once in a while, the spouses say to each other, "I love you," then harmony is restored.

There should be night followed by day and day followed by night, but never an endless stretch of night alone. Of course, sometimes the husband is absolutely incorrigible. I will give you an example. An educated girl with qualifications and a job in an advertising company married a drunkard who used to drink heavily and beat her. She would go into the drawing room with a blanket and steal some sleep there. Later she begot two children, but the husband became audacious. He started bringing another woman home in the presence of his wife. This is an act of great audacity; a man of character could not do it.

I happened to meet him by chance and I tried to give him first aid only, but this did not work. Then I advised her to go in for surgery. She left the house, taking her two children with her and found a job. Then she also got custody of the children from the court. Later, she went to Germany, married a German gentleman and had two more children. About a year or two ago she came here with her husband and all four children. When I asked after her welfare, she said that her problem was solved.

Disbanding a marriage

You may think it was wrong but I do not think so, because everyone has a right to happiness. Nobody wants to remain unhappy, whether man, woman or animal. *Paramananda*, supreme joy, is a universal goal, and to eradicate sorrow is a human endeavour, a *purushartha*. Even a dog, when it feels cold, comes under your bed for warmth because it does not want discomfort. Nobody wants sorrow or distress. Therefore, when a husband can give no happiness to his

wife and a wife can give no happiness to her husband, they should part.

A marriage where a husband can give neither security nor even the slightest respect to his wife should be disbanded. It is not a marriage, but a devastation, a ruin in which both husband and wife are destroying each other's personalities. Day and night there is tension. In household life there should not be such unbroken tension. If there is some tension it must be dissolved and if that cannot be done then the husband and wife should stay away from each other, like petrol and fire.

In olden times we did not have such provisions in our society, but now the constitution and the law have sanctioned them. However, these legal sanctions should not be misused. On the contrary, both husband and wife should try to make the best of their marriage. This is my suggestion, although I have had no first hand experience of marriage. I did not graduate in grihastha ashrama, I just dropped out after my matriculation. You are not only graduates but also post-graduates, and some of you even have doctorates. You all know more about such things than I do, but this is my suggestion according to my limited knowledge.

If it is true that whatever man does is inspired by God Himself, then how does He become a party to sin and merit?

When life was created, Parameshwara made a law, a system, a mandate, as well. For example, when you sow the seed of a mango, guava or sandalwood tree, a flower, vegetable or grain, some rules made by God inevitably apply. One rule is that you will reap what you sow. If you sow wheat, you will only get wheat, not mung beans. But God has also made certain other rules pertaining to the sprouting and growth of a seed, such as how much water and which manure should be given. For example, rice needs more water than maize; peanuts will only grow underground. We believe that everything happens according to God's wish, but God has laid down certain rules for different systems.

It is not enough to believe in the will of God; you have to follow God's rules as well. In the language of the shastras, these rules are known as dharma and adharma. Dharma means actions that are right, proper and necessary. Adharma means actions that are not right and should not be done. If you sow wheat seeds in properly prepared beds, but fill the beds up with too much water, then that would be an adharmic act. Here the term adharma means that which is incorrect, improper or wrong. Overwatering is actually good for rice but not for wheat. Similarly, if you cultivate paddy fields but leave them without water, they will dry up. This, too, would be adharma. So what is right, proper and necessary is dharma, and what is wrong and improper is adharma.

Therefore, the natural law that is an integral part of each being becomes the will of God. When God created human beings, He gave them the sense of *viveka*, or discrimination, to evaluate right and wrong, good and bad. But *viveka* is there only in seed form; human beings have to cultivate and nurture it. When man obeys the will of God, he flourishes and evolves, because while obeying the will of God he utilizes his intelligence, his *viveka*, and follows God's rules. So everything that is created in this universe: earth, water, fire, air, ether, minerals, vegetation, insects, birds, animals and humans, all develop or become retarded, thrive or perish, according to the will of God, within the governance of God's laws. If the laws are followed, there is progress. If the laws are flouted, there is regression. However, the laws of nature and instinct strictly limit all species below humans.

God has given *viveka*, the sense of discrimination, only to man. Only human beings know what must be done, *idam kartavyam*, and what must not be done, *idam akartavyam*, as well as the reasons why. Only man knows why poisonous and stale food should not be consumed, why tobacco, narcotics and liquor should be shunned, why gambling, cheating, theft, murder, kidnapping and such crimes should not be committed. Human beings are equipped to reason about

these things, because they are aware of the consequences and know what will undo them. They know too many chillies will lead to dysentery, too much ghee will increase cholesterol, too much alcohol will cause acidity. Everybody knows what is detrimental and should be avoided. In short, dharma is that which helps you to develop, to attain happiness and well-being, peace and health. Adharma is that which brings about sickness, suffering and general unhappiness.

In addition, there are personal shortcomings, social errors and spiritual lapses, which accompany an individual even after physical death. Certain errors ingrained in the consciousness become part of one's *samskara*, the seeds of karma in the next life. These *samskara* remain embedded in man's causal body and pass onto his next birth where they influence the direction of his next life. These are called sin and merit, *paap* and *punya*. So, on the one hand, there is sin and merit, and on the other hand, dharma and adharma. Dharma and adharma will yield fruit in this life itself. Sin and merit may or may not yield fruit in this life, but they will definitely do so in the next life. Sin and merit accompany man like his shadow and both fructify.

The karmas are not just connected with man's senses, but with his consciousness and emotions, such as hatred and attachment. Strong, persistent animosity towards someone is not a karma of the body; it is deep-rooted in the subconscious area of awareness. The karmas connected with man's inner awareness are called sins and merits. For example, if you come across someone in agony, you feel deeply distressed and lose sleep over it at night. All these emotions and feelings arise from the subconscious, from the core of your being, and travel with you from lifetime to lifetime.

The actions, which arise from these feelings become sins or merits and will certainly follow you in your next lifetime. Such actions are not exhausted in this life alone. They assume the form of seeds, entering the causal body in a very subtle manner, and are worked out in the next life. In this way, the karmas become a chain of cause and effect, like the

chicken and the egg. An endless chain of causation arises in which the cause becomes the effect and the effect becomes the cause. This leads to what is called the cycle of birth and death, life after life.

In today's stressful life, what should man's duty be and how should he lead the life of a sadhu in the role of a householder?

First of all, you need to understand that life has been the same down through the ages, in Satya yuga, in Treta yuga and now in Kali yuga. When man is born the first thing he does is cry, not laugh. When a child is born, it has no understanding of suffering, but it definitely experiences suffering and begins to cry. The mahatmas tell us that there is suffering and pain in life. Lord Buddha explored all the means to find a solution to the problem of suffering. He himself found peace and happiness, but he could not make others happy. All great souls have pointed out the way for others to attain happiness and hope, but others have not been able to follow the path.

So, to answer the question of how to be a sadhu while leading the life of a householder, this should not be attempted. The code of household life is different to the code of sannyasa life. There should be no confusion, no mix-up between the two. By following the code and leading the life of a householder, you are not less than a sannyasin. A householder is not a small time sannyasin; he is also a great sannyasin. In householder life you have the opportunity to cultivate some rare, divine qualities. In the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* there is a description of divine qualities. If you have not read it, read it tomorrow.

The divine qualities are best learned while you are living as a householder. Fortitude, restraint, self-control, understanding another's point of view, learning to curb your temper are all divine qualities. I have mentioned three divine qualities but I could easily enumerate a hundred and eight, if time was not so short. Household life is the best time to cultivate such qualities. Completing BA and an MA

in college is academic education, but family life is another school of practical education. My guru, Swami Sivananda, used to say, “Family life, grihastha ashrama, is the university of life, where you can learn tolerance, wisdom, self-control and self-sacrifice.” In the absence of such qualities, family life becomes a chaotic wilderness, a family of animals. ‘We two and our two’ means ‘we two beasts and our two baby beasts’. How can one live in the midst of animals?

One lives as a householder in grihastha ashrama and, at the same time, prepares for sannyasa, which is the pinnacle of spiritual life, a very high state. This is the teaching of Vedic dharma and the purpose of the Vedic lifestyle. These are the codes of Vedic culture. The first twenty-five years of life are devoted to academic learning, general grooming and obtaining a qualification for a vocation. You may train yourself in computers, physics, history or geography. Then you enter family life by getting married.

*Life is a mere four hour play,
Let there be no fights, no quarrels.
Already there is sorrow, distress, pain and problems,
In the way we pray, pine, crave,
Aspire, desire and long for things.
You say something,
Let me also express myself
And make this short-lived fair a success.*

In grihastha ashrama you gain wisdom which will come in handy later in sannyasa ashrama. After the age of fifty, as you near retirement, you can take proper sannyasa. If there is the opportunity, shave your head and wear geru. Otherwise, live at home and gather together a few like-minded friends in the evening for a satsang of your liking. Choose one of the scriptures such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Ramayana*, Upanishads, *Brahma Sutras*, the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna or Sai Baba. After grihastha ashrama comes vanaprastha ashrama. So, if you are a karma sannyasin, live like a karma sannyasin, and if you are a poorna sannyasin, live like a poorna sannyasin.

How should one surrender the ego in order to attain devotion?

I don't understand how devotion and ego can ever go together. You love someone only when you forget yourself, when you have no ego. If you still hold on to your ego, you cannot say, "I am yours." You can only say, "I am my own." When I say, "I am yours," it means that I have given myself over to you and accepted your self as my own. So, there can be no ego in devotion. As long as the ego remains, there can be no devotion.

When I was there, Hari was not.

And now, when Hari is there, I am not.

Kabir Das has made this clear. The lamp and the flame become one. The 'I', or ego, and devotion cannot coexist; it is a reverse Ganga. Love is to be given to others, not extracted from others. Love is its own reward. There is no difference between love and devotion in bhakti.

In English it is called divine love. The Sufis call it *ishk hakiki*. The Sufi sect of Islam completely subscribes to Vedic philosophy. According to the Sufis, material love is *ishk mijaji* and spiritual love is *ishk hakiki*. What the Sufis call *ishk mijaji*, we call *maya*. When you turn your love towards material life, it is *ishk mijaji*, flowing towards *maya*. But when it flows towards God, it becomes *bhakti*. The love between Radha and Krishna was not *bhakti*, it was pure love. The word 'love' is much misused; nobody really understands its meaning. Sandalwood diminishes itself in order to give fragrance. A lamp burns itself out to give light. Love is also like that. One finishes oneself giving love to others.

Even in the family this happens between mother and son, brother and sister, boyfriend and girlfriend. A person completely absorbs the image of the person he loves. While eating, drinking, sleeping, walking and working, he thinks only of the object of his love. It is called *surat*, continuous awareness of the object of love. Wherever a lover goes, he carries the memory of the person he loves. He can think of

nobody else. While talking to someone, he is thinking of the person he loves. For example, some of our brothers are sitting here listening to satsang, but thinking about smoking a bidi. So in between they go out and smoke. The bidi has become their surat.

Someone suddenly gets the urge to go out and have a cup of tea, so tea is the surat for such a person. Surat is the obsession that is continuously with you. Kabir Das calls it continuous, uninterrupted awareness, remembrance, *sada suhagin*. Suhagin is the word for a married woman. In India, the mark of a suhagin is the vermilion on her forehead. This surat is continuously with you. Surat is that part of your awareness where there is unbroken remembrance of God or any other thing that you hold dear to your heart. It could be your wife, your child or even your bottle or bidi.

If you want to cultivate devotion, then you must learn to love. When Sri Krishna sent Uddhava to Gokul, he said, "You know everything about yoga: pranayama, mudra, bandha, kriya. Go to Radha and the gopis, who are in distress, and teach them yoga nidra." So, Uddhava went to Gokul to impart his knowledge of yoga to the gopis, but the gopis would have none of it. They said, "Our awareness followed Sri Krishna when He left here, and now we have nothing left with which to learn what you are teaching." Uddhava fell silent, as he had no answer to these words of the gopis, who were steeped in pure love. When one is love-struck, one becomes mad. Nobody can persuade or dissuade a person who has fallen in love. Parents are absolutely helpless when their children fall in love.

The gopis asked Uddhava which was superior, yoga or viyoga. Then they told him that viyoga was like yoga, because in viyoga there was definitely the remembrance of the separated lover, and hence it was nothing less than yoga. When the Lord was with them, they were in a state of yoga. When He went away, they were physically in a state of viyoga, but mentally in a state of yoga with Him. They were so lovelorn that they felt neither hunger nor thirst, they thought neither of bathing nor of sleeping. So, if you want

to cultivate bhakti, first cultivate love. God has sent you into grihastha ashrama to learn lessons in love. In household life you learn to give to others. This is your training school.

In the family you experience all the facets of love. You learn to love as a mother, which is maternal love. You love your husband or wife, which is romantic love. You love your sister or brother, which is sibling affection. Different relationships enrich different forms of love within you. These are different aspects and qualities of love. But when all these aspects combine and fuse together, you say, *Tvameva Maataa cha Pitaa Tvameva* – “You are my Mother and my Father.” At present when you utter these words, it is only lip service. But if there is bhakti then you really feel what you are saying.

Devotion means fusion of the various aspects and attitudes of love, the totality of emotion, in a focused manner. When all the love within converges on one beloved, who is Bhagwan, then you become the bhakta and the relationship between the two of you is one of bhakti. There is no external commodity used in this type of love, as when you use wood to make a chair or table or an idol of Shiva or Ganesha. Think it over deeply. It is a very sweet subject, but a very difficult one to grasp. Love is difficult and devotion too is equally difficult. As long as your ‘me, me’ and ‘I, I’ goes on, devotion will never develop. This ‘me, me, my, my’ is like the bleating of a goat.

You are not really prepared to give yourself up in love. Everybody expects to receive love, but nobody can really give love. A wife expects love from her husband and a husband expects love from his wife. But as long as there are expectations, there cannot be an exchange of real love. This is a certainty. I guarantee that you will never know real love as long as your expectations are still lurking around. The only secret of making love successful is to give up expectation. A husband expects his wife to be devoted, loyal, obedient, soft-hearted, beautiful, well-dressed, tender and gentle. What the wife wants I cannot say. It may be just a reversal of the roles of give and take.

Throughout life it is your attitude to love that is important, whatever your age. From today onwards, you should think about only one thing: “I must give, give, give.” This will make all your relationships cordial. Then your relationship with God will also be discovered anew. Mira was not mad. Even to this day we praise her; the whole world holds her in high esteem and sings her songs. But she was mad in a way. Although properly married, she regarded Lord Krishna as her husband. Therefore, how can we say that she wasn’t mad? She used to sing, *Mere to Giridhara Gopala, doosara naa koe, jaake sira mora mukuta mero pati soee* – my Giridhara Gopala, crowned with peacock feathers, is my real husband.

This innermost feeling you have towards God, this relationship coming from the bottom of your heart and soul is the real relationship. But it can also be of a different nature. It can be a relationship like the one between Radha and Krishna. These relationships are not at all physical. They are relationships of the soul, of faith and devotion. It is our faith that God is our protector and that He listens to our prayers. It is my faith that Sri Shankara is sitting somewhere among us as we sing in praise of Rama. This is called relationship.

Relationship depends upon the depth of your faith. Without faith there can be no relationship. If there is no faith between husband and wife, between father and son, between brother and sister, there can be no relationship. Thus faith is the basis, the very foundation of all relationships. Faith is impossible until the hard crust of the ego breaks. To break your hard-hearted ego, you have to bow down before the God of stone. You have to worship God in His visible form, the *sakara Ishwara*. God is not one. God is infinite, in myriads of forms. If you say God is only One in the numerical sense, then there is a problem. But if by that One, you mean infinite, then it is all right.

On the one hand, you say God is One, and on the other hand, you say He is omnipresent in infinite forms and aspects of the universe. Wherever you cast your glance, you

get a glimpse of God. You can even worship the peepal tree as God. I do it every evening after taking a fresh bath. I bow to Lord Rama as well. Why? I lack nothing. The best part of my life is already over. What do I need now? Why should I worship Lord Rama at the end of my life? I am a student of Adwaita and my initiation too was into Adwaita, which has nothing to do with idols and idol worship. Adwaita means *Ayamatma Brahma*, I am Brahma myself; *Prajnanam Brahma*, I am Brahma in spirit; *Aham Brahmasmi*, I am God; *Tattwamasi*, Thou art That.

When I was given initiation into sannyasa, I was made to listen to these four mantras of Adwaita. But today I worship Sri Rama with Sitaji. I have already celebrated the marriage of Tulsi to the Shaligram. I do arati to the peepal tree. I offer delicacies to Lord Ganesha every day. What would you call me now? I realized that as long as the ego is lurking within me, God is miles and miles away from me. When I was there Hari was not, but now Hari is there and I am not. All darkness is dispelled now. The flame is bright and steady.

It was said in one discourse that we need to find a way to accept contradictions and conflicts in life and still remain harmonious and balanced. How can we achieve this?

Why shouldn't there be contradictions in life? Contradiction is the law of life, progress and mobility. We are all contradictions. There is contradiction everywhere in creation, not uniformity. There is no uniform philosophy in life. The very fact of existence itself is a contradiction. Who is Lord Shiva? He has the moon on his forehead and the Ganga flowing from his hair. He rides on a bull and sits on a tiger skin with Parvati. By the example of his personal life he is trying to teach you that life is like this. In the day you work, in the night you sleep, and so there is balance. You eat lunch and digest it then you eat dinner and digest it, so there is balance. You don't eat all the time, like the birds and animals.

If there were no contradictions, no difficulties, no adverse situations in your life, there would be no progress.

Friction is the secret of motion. When there is motion, there will be friction; when there is friction there will be motion. Therefore, you should not worry about the various contradictions in your life, whether emotional, mental or even intellectual. People often get very concerned about it, but I think they are being neurotic.

When we give freedom to our grown-up children of fifteen, twenty-five or thirty-five years of age, they still make mistakes and remain immature. In that situation, parents feel remorse for not having guided their wards properly. What path should parents follow?

Just look around and you will see that even fifty-five, sixty and sixty-five year old people often make mistakes. They are fighting in the law courts, they are going to jail and they are being raided. I do not agree that it is only young people who make mistakes. On the contrary I think that the mistakes that youngsters make are not so serious. If a child pickpockets a watch, it is not such a serious offence. People will forgive him, saying that, after all, he is just a child. But if I were to steal something, it would be a crime. People would change their tone and attitude towards me. I would be called a thief and a dacoit. If a child spits at someone, he is let off. But if I were to spit at someone, it would be taken very seriously.

Our opinion, our assessment of our children is erroneous. If you want to teach them something, to guide and explain things to them, to groom them, to reform them, it is not their problem; it is your problem. It is a psychological problem. Psychoanalytical theory tells us that the adults have a psychological problem, that they feel insecure in their relationship with their children. It is the adults who should go to a psychiatrist and have their psychological problems treated.

There is an assumption that older people make no mistakes. Adults make mistakes very shrewdly and in such a way that they will not be caught. Children commit mistakes, which are discovered instantly, but the mistakes of adults are

very clever. Furthermore, the mistakes made by older people are mostly to do with money. They are obsessed with money, but children have small ambitions. Therefore, young people should be given more freedom. Even if they go wrong, it will be a small mistake. It will not be disastrous. It will not be as serious as the mistakes of their elders.

Why is everyone afraid of death?

This is the wonder! When the yaksha asked Yudhishtira, “What is the biggest wonder in this world?” he replied, “People are dying every day and yet each one wants to be deathless.” When no one has become immortal yet, how can you be the first one? People are afraid of death because they think it is the termination of the chapter, the end of the book. They do not believe that they will continue to live even after death. They see a body being burnt to ashes and think that everything has ended and that they will end up like that.

People believe in ghosts, vampires and spirits, but they do not believe in rebirth. They hesitate to believe in rebirth, but by believing in ghosts they infer the continuation of the atma, even after the death of the body. To become a ghost, the atma, the spirit, has to survive, even after the death of the body. When you see the complete destruction of the body after death, then who becomes the ghost? Surely, not the body. Obviously, that which is other than the body becomes the ghost. When man realises that he continues to live in spirit, even after the death of the body, then there is no fear of death. When he sees death as a process of changing into a new role, a new life, a new opportunity, new karma, a new model of the body, which is free from its present afflictions, then he becomes free of fear.

Now my body is old, it is a 1923 model. So why should I have any difficulty in leaving it? In this body I can neither play golf, football, hockey, badminton, tennis or basketball. I can neither marry nor dance, nor can I enjoy good food or drink. In spite of this, man clings to his old model and is not willing to let it go. He thinks, “It doesn’t matter if the

house is filthy and full of mosquitoes, if the roof is leaking and the windows are falling apart. Still I prefer to live in this same useless house. Where can I go if I leave it?" But this is wrong.

When your karma with that body is over, you should not regret it. I am not talking about untimely death or death at a young age, I am talking about death in old age. Everybody should book his ticket for the new world by the age of sixty-five or seventy. Even if God says to you, "My boy, your reservation is not yet made; all the seats are booked," you should make an advance payment. Wherever there is a vacant seat, leave this world to take it. Birth is indefinite and uncertain, but death is a definite certainty. There can be no two opinions about this, yet everyone is frightened of death. This is the biggest wonder of the world.

We hear that avatars, incarnations of God, take place from time to time and that the Lord will come again in the Kali yuga. Could you please tell us something in this regard?

I do not know much about avatars. In the Bhagavat and other Puranas, it is written that the time is not yet ripe for Kalki avatar to descend on the Earth. Kalki is deemed to appear at the end of Kali yuga. All the avatars have taken place at the end of the epochs and are said to be the culmination of that epoch. I am trying to answer this question on the basis of what is written in the scriptures. Even if I personally came to know about the forthcoming avatar, I would not disclose the mystery, as his coming needs to be a closely guarded secret. Otherwise he will be on the hit list of the super powers and that is what happened in the case of Sri Krishna. Lord Rama denied that he was an avatar when Hanuman asked him. He kept telling Hanuman that he was the son of Dasharatha and Kaushalya. Even though he was an avatar, he hid this identity.

Therefore, this phenomenon is out of the ordinary. But I do not see its likelihood in the near future, nor do I feel its necessity. An avatar comes when man is incapable of handling his own problems. Now man is not incapable or

helpless. He is beginning to reform society. The judiciary and legal systems have not yet toppled down completely, nor have human rights. So, to my mind there is no need for the avatar to arrive just yet. When the time comes, you will all think the world has become so bad that it needs drastic measures. But I do not think that this is the situation. I am not a pessimist, nor do I think that the world is so bad that it can be reformed by none less than God. No, I do not think so.

What is the difference between grace and blessings?

They are one and the same. Whether you call it *kripa*, *ashirvad* or *anugraha*, in essence it is the same. It is just that different words are used.

Is it true that destiny can be arrested by purushartha, human endeavour?

No. I used to think that destiny could be arrested by human effort, but now, gradually, as I am going deeper and deeper into it, I realize that destiny cannot be arrested or changed. Even God Himself does not interfere with it. This has been written clearly in the shastras. In Balakanda of *Ramacharitamanas*, Shiva tells Parvati:

*Live as Rama has kept you,
It is of no use racking your brain over it.*

This is the preaching of the saints, but we talk a lot of nonsense in this regard. There is a law unto everything. Flora and fauna, insects and worms, animals and human beings, planets and worlds are created according to its codes and I have not seen even the slightest variation or lapse in its operation. All phenomena: birth, death, karma, the sciences of alchemy, physics, chemistry and botany all tell us that these laws are very accurate. The reactions are unfailingly predictable. The sun, moon and their eclipses all have laws. I had given it a lot of thought in my childhood and early days. I thought that man could regulate the course of life, that he could change his destiny. But today, when I

think about life, I feel that destiny is truth and man must accept it.

Finale

Today is the last day of our Ram Naam Aradhana. Lord Shiva may be lurking somewhere in our midst, as we are dwelling on his favourite subject. Lord Shiva's first love is dance and he himself is the Nataraja. The first and foremost hobby of Lord Shiva and also of Lord Krishna is dance.

There is an additional good omen today. It is the birthday of Lord Dattatreya. He is the guru of the avadhootas. He is the trinity: Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh put together. Dattatreya initiated all kinds of people, from all religions, castes and creeds. He gave diksha to householders and also to renunciates and ascetics. He was the son of Atri and Anusuiya. Atri was a rishi who, on being disabled, was carried to a prostitute by his wife, Anusuiya. Dattatreya laid down the foundation of the avadhoota cult. Today, being full moon, Marga Shirsha poornima, it is his birthday. It is very auspicious that we are not only having a program of devotional music and dance, but also on this finale we are witnessing the donation of cows and hearing the good news of scholarships being given to female students.

Today my holiday comes to an end. Tomorrow I shall be back on duty. It is beautiful that we could begin and conclude the festival with a program of dance. There was only one purpose behind this festival. It was to lure Lord Shiva to us and Lord Shiva has definitely come here. The whole population of Mohanpur and Rikhia has poured in. They are so full of enthusiasm. I pray that He fulfils all the wishes of each and every person who has come here. I pray for their material and spiritual well-being.

This is not the conclusion of a conference. It is the finale, the culmination of a worshipful and devout festival in which there was dance, music, discourses and the worship of Guru Granth Sahib. We unfolded a complete range of bhakti in

full view. Bhakti for God means to remember Him, to turn to Him by any means. You have all remembered Him for three continuous hours today. For the whole of this month you have heard the name of God so often that you may have suffered from indigestion. Therefore, I am bringing the festival to a close.

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Swami Satyananda was born in Almora (Uttaranchal) in 1923. Drawn to spiritual life from an early age, he left home at the age of eighteen, and in 1943 surrendered himself to Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh who initiated him into Dashnami sannyasa in 1947. He served his guru for twelve years, perfecting every aspect of spiritual life. Thereafter, he travelled throughout the Indian subcontinent as a wandering ascetic.



Realizing the need of the times as scientific rendition of the ancient system of yoga, he founded the International Yoga Fellowship in 1956 and the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963. During the next twenty years, Swami Satyananda hoisted the flag of yoga in every corner of the world, consolidated BSY into a foremost institution of yoga, and authored over eighty major texts on yoga, tantra and spiritual life.

Satyananda Yoga™ became a tradition which combines classical knowledge with experiential understanding and a modern outlook. In 1984 he founded the Yoga Research Foundation to synchronize scientific research and yoga, and Sivananda Math to assist the underprivileged. In 1988, at the peak of his achievements, he renounced everything and adopted kshetra sannyasa, living as a paramahansa ascetic. In 1989 Rikhia was revealed to him, where he came to live and performed higher vedic sadhanas in seclusion. Receiving the command to provide for his neighbours in 1991, he allowed the ashram to help the underprivileged villages in the region. From 1995 onwards, he performed a twelve-year Rajasooya Yajna with the sankalpa of peace, plenty and prosperity for all, and in 2007 he announced the establishment of Rikhiapeeth with its mandate to 'serve, love, give'.

Swami Satyananda attained mahasamadhi, a yogic accomplishment of discarding the body at will to become one with the universal consciousness, in 2009, in the presence of his disciples.



“The purpose of Ram Naam Aradhana is to discover and experience your relationship with God, which somehow or other you have lost . . . When you chant the name of Rama, your heart and mind become cleansed of all impurities.”

Bhakti Yoga Sagar Volume 4 consists of satsangs by Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati in Rikhia, India, during the Ram Naam Aradhana, held during the month of Marga Shirsha (November–December) 1996. During this festival, devoted to the worship of Sri Rama, Sri Swamiji expounded on the benefits of singing God’s name as the easiest sadhana to purify the heart and mind. He also said that compassion is the highest virtue and can be developed by contributing selflessly to the welfare of others. Spiritual seekers should look for God among the poor and needy, as to see God in human form is the greatest sadhana in life.

Includes 16 colour photographs.



ISBN: 978-81-86336-65-6